



No Spritzes To Give

USING ALCOHOL, NOT ABUSING
ALCOHOL

"Spread Kindness, Not Germs." -Carson Dellosa

Consider this pandemic pandemonium. French housekeeper Yvette Delacour was working in the penthouse of the Maestro Hotel and Casino. She had just finished wiping clean the mirrors on the walls near the elevator when she reached into her cart to disinfect. Yvette found her spray bottle, but her worst nightmare came to life: it was empty! How was she to sanitize the mirrors with an empty disinfectant bottle? This has never happened to her in all her years of working at this hotel. Was it sabotage? She had paper towels, toilet paper, mini soap bars, little shampoo bottles — and an empty disinfectant spray bottle; those did not satiate her compulsive objective to vanquish germs.

When the government initiated COVID-19 protocols, Yvette had raised the bar of ultimate cleanliness and germ mitigation, making sure her supplies were stocked! Running out of supplies always happened to someone else, not Yvette Delacour. Yvette raged inside as she returned to the elevator to ride it down to the basement where the supply closet was located.

She was proud that her boss relied on her when a recent disaster occurred in the hotel, but he interrupted her lunch and rushed her to clean with this joke of a cart. She ruminated on her preparation prior to her boss's catastrophe. Before leaving the supply room in the basement, she tapped her cart seven times, a ritual to bless her with luck so she wouldn't encounter anything unsightly. It didn't always work. Immediately, she guarded herself with an N95 mask as a precaution. She inspected all four corners of the elevator as she entered, keeping a three-foot distance from the control panel and other items in this germ box. She planted herself firmly in the center and stared wide-eyed at the door, looking out for anyone who might come in and invade her three-foot personal space with the coronavirus. Extreme? Nah. She could stop with these compulsions any time she wanted to, but she never wanted to.

A spot on button 3 drew her attention. How she wished she had her Driftwood Waters disinfectant (not an antibacterial) with her. With viral COVID-19 now running rampant, an antibacterial would have been no match. She had an almost overwhelming urge to sanitize this button that so many guests, so many fingers carrying so many germs, had pushed. She smiled as she imagined a germ-free button. Whenever she spritzed, the saltiness of the scent overwhelmed her nostrils, and a lightness took her into a sea of serenity.

A hand confidently and purposely reached past her and pushed the button for the casino on the first floor, snapping her out of her Driftwood Waters reverie. Regrettably, the hand belonged to Antonella Clemente, a rival housekeeper. She must have entered the elevator while Yvette was enraptured in her trance. Antonella had the odd rooms; Yvette had to clean the evens. This arrangement worked because Yvette never wanted a room that ended in 13 and Antonella acquiesced. She greeted Yvette with a warm smile, which was more than she expected from her nemesis. They have known each other ever since they began training in the cleansing arts at the Housekeeper Certification Academy. They always acted competitively toward each other, seeing who could clean the best over the 17 measurable and subjective metrics created by the HCA.

Though Yvette was highly trained in her duties, especially in stayover cleaning, her mysophobia often got the best of her. She spent too much time focused on buttons due to her inflated fear of infectious germs. She'd imagined all the possible scenarios in which a room would get dirty and start all over to prevent an unlikely tragedy. Remote control buttons, safe buttons, vending machine buttons, elevator buttons. So many buttons! This conscientiousness led to Antonella being praised by the hotel owners for her efficiency, while Yvette's pay was adjusted for the opposite reason. Antonella never spoke of her successes to Yvette, but that little smirk she gave irked Yvette every day because she knew. She knew.

Yvette wasn't innocent in this game either, especially when she would steal and hide cleaning supplies from Antonella's cart (Yvette had her own blends; she did not covet Antonella's toxic hotel-issued sprays), and turned her back when her frenemy would suffer accusations of theft. They never spoke to each other anymore, but they recognized who to

hang their hatred on during this silent sport of escalation. Of course, they knew.

The long-drawn silence felt daunting in the elevator as the two women stared straight ahead, patiently waiting for the elevator to descend to the next floor. Yvette tapped her foot repeatedly to a song only she could hear while Antonella slowly steamed and waited for the ding to alert her that the waiting nightmare with Yvette was over. Finally, the elevator came to a halt, and the doors opened on floor 2, where the seafood buffet was.

Cough! The harsh discordant sound of sickness rippled through the air, echoing like sharp dissonant notes. Yvette popped her head out of the elevator, yet no one was there — until she looked down and saw Leandro The Slug, an ungodly sight that made Yvette sick to her stomach. He was still dripping from the pool, shirtless, morbidly obese, and wearing a very form-fitting, stained yellow Speedo nicknamed the "Man Jammer." Leandro was clutching a beach towel in one hand and two crab legs in the other. His fingers clenched around the seafood like a toddler clutching his prized marbles. What was even worse was that he was wheezing like an alley cat with asthma. The hacking and coughing left a thick and sticky mucus mist that could be traced to Leandro, this man-thing, a resident psycho with a drooling problem. The Slug was sweaty and didn't feel the need to make an effort or use a previously recommended wheelchair, so he chose to crawl, dirtying his beach towel and his lunchtime leftovers. Antonella squeezed herself to the back of the elevator to watch "The Yvette and Leandro Show." Yvette tried to slow her descent into personal madness by presenting him with a mask — those she had plenty of. With one hand covering her closed eyes, Yvette reached her other hand out as far as she could towards Leandro. She quickly pulled her hand back as soon as the mask left her grasp out of fear of his contamination. He

confirmed her suspicions by messily cramming the mask into his mouth after dropping his towel.

Yvette, almost about to throw up from the number of germs she visualized lying ahead of her, had no choice but to get back to work. Using her elbow, she chaotically pressed the button to the gaming floor since Leonardo always goes there. She grabbed the essentially empty bottle and frantically squeezed the trigger repeatedly. Out came tiny drops, which barely dampened her washcloth. Her attention shifted to Leandro as he tore the mask from his gaping maw, and the crunchy mask dropped to the elevator floor. In the busy corners of her mind, she chanted, "Give me strength, heavenly spray, serenity now!" But that affirmation did nothing to ease her anxiety, and the lack of her treasured Driftwood Waters frustrated her return to her own private Idaho. Leandro's droplets contaminated the air with utterly foul detritus, his revoltingly moist nature on the floor she had recently cleaned! Preparing to double down on her war on germs, she tightened her grip on the spray bottle until her fingers turned purple, verging on bruising.

The polluted mask landed close to Yvette's feet, and she started to back away from it as if it were a dangerous creature. She looked at Antonella, who smirked and motioned for her to pick the mask up. Yvette ignored that shit. Her face screwed up in discomfort, trapped in her world of germs, filth, and The Slug, now in his third year of living at the hotel.

Yvette noticed a benign disorder in her cart: the bleach bottle was not supposed to be mixed with the scent bottles, nor was it supposed to be hidden under dirty linen. Yvette stiffened as she carefully picked up the bottle so that her hand would not bump into Antonella. However, the bottle slipped out of her hand instead and crashed to the floor. The trigger cracked, releasing a wave of strong, irritating odor. Antonella now

started sneezing and without a mask. Jesus! Yvette cringed and handed Antonella a tissue and a mask from her apron. Leandro unexpectedly picked up his contaminated mask and smeared it all over his face. Yvette winced with every coarse rattle of his diseased lungs and started to hyperventilate and feel dizzy. She immediately turned away from both of them, held on to the bar handle attached to the wall, and regained her composure. She intently focused her eyes on the panel that needed one good spritz if it needed a thousand. Yvette wanted everyone and everything to dissolve away so that she could properly and perfectly clean the elevator. It was her duty, her desire, and her fixation to accomplish this benevolence.

Finally, the elevator opened to reveal the casino floor, smoky as it was. Saving the mask for later, Leandro, all teary-eyed from the bleach exposure, shoved the biohazard down the side of his Speedo to both Yvette and Antonella's disgust. (They agreed on something!) Then to add insult to injury, Leandro crawled away without ever saying a word, leaving a monstrous fetid blob of sweat and saliva behind, along with his beach towel and one of the crab legs. Yvette couldn't help but dry heave.

Antonella stepped into the gaming arena, but not before looking deep into Yvette's soul with an unexpected but pleasant warm smile. Antonella handed her a disinfectant spray bottle, one with the scent of Driftwood Waters! Yvette wasn't sure what to make of that, but perhaps they were at a peaceful stalemate for now.

Holding back her own tears, Yvette blinked a couple of times. It could have been joy, or maybe a residual reaction to the bleach. She relieved the sting in her eyes and the grateful lump in her throat. Yvette carefully took the spray and watched as the maskless Antonella walked through the casino to exit out to her car without another glance back.

After the elevator door closed and when Yvette was alone with her thoughts, she was an unstoppable force. The floor and mirrored elevator walls were almost transcendent, shining a beam of light to where all the surfaces reflected off one another, the light bouncing into infinity. She returned to the penthouse, where she transformed the place into the clean, bright scene that was a dead ringer for the photo in the brochure. She imagined there to be a Mt. Rushmore of Cleaning where one day she would join Martha Stewart, Alice Nelson from *The Brady Bunch*, and of course, Mr. Clean.

At last, her shift ended, and it was time to head home, where she could relax in her hypoallergenic bubble of safety and control, where masks were plentiful and her favorite disinfectant spray even more so.



See the end of the book for elevator etiquette rules followed or broken.
Elevator Etiquette Codes: 3A, 3F, 3G, 4A, 4B, 4C, 5C, 6B, 6C, 6E, 7B, 8A, 8B, 8C, 8D