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*Samuel French Acting Edition*

# On the Razzle

*by* Tom Stoppard

Adapted from

*Einen Jux will er sich machen*

by Johann Nestroy

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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## CHARACTERS

WEINBERL  
CHRISTOPHER  
SONDERS  
MARIE  
ZANGLER  
GERTRUD  
BELGIAN FOREIGNER  
MELCHIOR  
HUPFER  
PHILIPPINE  
MADAME KNORR  
MRS FISCHER  
COACHMAN  
WAITER ONE  
WAITER TWO  
GERMAN MAN  
GERMAN WOMAN  
SCOTS MAN  
SCOTS WOMAN  
CONSTABLE  
LISETTE  
MISS BLUMENBLATT  
RAGAMUFFIN

PIPER, CITIZENS, WAITERS, CUSTOMERS, ETC.

*On the Razzle* was first performed on 1 September 1981 at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh as part of the 1981 Edinburgh International Festival, and opened to the press on 22 September 1981 at the Lyttelton Theatre. The cast included:

|                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| WEINBERL             | Ray Brooks                    |
| CHRISTOPHER          | Felicity Kendal               |
| SONDERS              | Barry McGinn                  |
| MARIE                | Mary Chilton                  |
| ZANGLER              | Dinsdale Landen               |
| GERTRUD              | Hilda Braid                   |
| A FOREIGNER          | Paul Gregory                  |
| MELCHIOR             | Michael Kitchen               |
| HUPFER               | John Challis                  |
| LIGHTNING            | Thomas Henty and Timothy Hick |
| PHILIPPINE           | Allyson Rees                  |
| MADAME KNORR         | Rosemary McHale               |
| FRAU FISCHER         | Deborah Norton                |
| COACHMAN             | Harold Innocent               |
| ITALIAN WAITER       | John Challis                  |
| GERMAN COUPLE        | Teresa Codling                |
|                      | Clyde Gatell                  |
| SCOTTISH COUPLE      | Greta Watson                  |
|                      | Andrew Cuthbert               |
| SECOND WAITER        | Philip Talbot                 |
| CONSTABLE            | Alan Haywood                  |
| FRAULEIN BLUMENBLATT | Joan Hickson                  |
| LISETTE              | Marianne Morley               |

Directed by Peter Wood

Designed by Carl Toms



## INTRODUCTION

*On the Razzle* is an adaptation of *Einen Jux will er sich machen* by Johann Nestroy (1801–62), who flourished as a comic actor and playwright in Vienna during the 1840s and '50s. Nestroy wrote eighty-odd plays, a handful of which are still regularly performed in that city, while thirty or forty others have had at least one revival in the German-speaking theatre since the Second World War. It is still as a Viennese writing for Viennese that his fame survives, for his eccentric way with language and his immersion in Viennese dialect gives partial truth to the assertion of one critic that Nestroy is 'untranslatable, even into German'.

This text is not, and could not be, labelled 'a translation'. All the main characters and most of the plot come from Nestroy but almost none of the dialogue attempts to offer a translation of what Nestroy wrote. My method might be compared to cross-country hiking with map and compass, where one takes a bearing on the next landmark and picks one's own way towards it.

Nestroy's way was satirical and verbally outrageous and often turned on a local reference. He also liked to include comic songs between scenes. *On the Razzle* makes no use of dialect, ignores period flavour in dialogue, and has no songs. It is still set in Vienna (though about fifty years later than *Einen Jux*) but not essentially so. The two essentials which this play takes from the original are, firstly, the almost mythic tale of two country mice escaping to town for a day of illicit freedom, adventure, mishap and narrow escapes from discovery; and, secondly, the prime concern to make the tale as comic an entertainment as possible.

Having no German I am indebted to Neville and Stephen Plaice who prepared a close literal translation for me at the request of the National Theatre (and who suggested the title). To Peter Wood, who directed the National Theatre production, is owed the

idea of bringing a new version of *Einen Jux* from the Danube to the South Bank.

I say 'new' version because there is already a celebrated old one, Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker*. It is not widely known—I didn't know it myself—that Wilder's play and (hence *Hello Dolly!* as well) is an adaptation of *Einen Jux*. When I discovered this I turned to other Nestroy plays thinking that perhaps in bringing a play from this almost unknown comic master into the English theatre I should take a path less famously trod, but I soon returned to *Jux* (its title contracting as affection grew). Firstly, this was the play which Peter Wood most wanted to do, attracted by the mythic quality mentioned above. Secondly, Wilder's temperament, which serves *The Matchmaker* so well, made gentler and more dignified use of the original than I intended, while, furthermore, his adaptation of the plot was rather more free than anything I had in mind. For example Dolly Levi, the matchmaker of the title, is Wilder's own invention.

So I offer myself the hope that the differences between the two are at least as great as the similarities, and that *On the Razzle*, if not an absolutely essential addition to the canon of adaptations in English from *Einen Jux will er sich machen*, is at least a welcome one.

TOM STOPPARD

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Although this text, like the first edition, is in two acts, the original production was done with two intermissions, the middle act beginning with 'The Journey to Vienna' and ending with the Restaurant Scene.



## ACT ONE

### *Zangler's shop*

*In which customers are served with great panache by WEINBERL and CHRISTOPHER. MARIE is the cashier in a gilded cage. Old-fashioned spring-loaded canisters travel on wires between the cage and the counters. A chute delivers a large sack of flour from up above to a position behind WEINBERL's counter. There is a trap door to a cellar. SONDEERS, incognito, is among the customers. A town clock chimes the hour. Customers are being ushered out by CHRISTOPHER. SONDEERS remains. Shop closing for lunch.*

*Zangler's room can occupy the stage with the shop, the action moving between the two.*

ZANGLER and GERTRUD. ZANGLER is usually worked up, as now. GERTRUD never is.

ZANGLER: My tailor has let me down again.

GERTRUD: Yes, I can see.

ZANGLER: No, you damned well can't. I'm referring to my new uniform which hasn't arrived yet, and today is the grand annual parade with the massed bands of the Sporting and Benevolent Societies of the Grocers' Company. It's enough to make one burst a bratwurst. I'll feel such a fool . . . There I'll be, president-elect and honorary whipper-in of the Friends of the Opera Fur and Feather Club, three times winner of the Johann Strauss Memorial Shield for duck-shooting, and I'll have to appear before the public in my old uniform. Perhaps I'd better not go out at all. That fortune-hunter Sonders is after my ward.

GERTRUD: My word.

ZANGLER: My ward! I won't rest easy until Marie is safely out of his reach. Now, don't forget, Marie's luggage is to be sent ahead to my sister-in-law's, Miss Blumenblatt at

twenty-three Carlstrasse.

GERTRUD: Miss Blumenblatt's.

ZANGLER: What is the address?

GERTRUD: Twenty-three Carlstrasse.

ZANGLER: What is it?

GERTRUD: Twenty-three Carlstrasse.

ZANGLER: Very well. Marie can stay with her until Sonders finds some other innocent girl to pursue, and furthermore it will stop the little slut from chasing after *him*. I'm damned sure they're sending messages to each other but I can't work out how they're doing it.

*(Zing! In the shop—now closed—a cash-canister zings along the wire to MARIE in her gilded cage.)*

### *Zangler's shop*

*The shop is closed. WEINBERL and CHRISTOPHER are absent. SONDERS, half hidden, has sent the canister. ZANGLER is on to him.*

ZANGLER: Sonders!

MARIE: Uncle!

SONDERS: Herr Zangler!

ZANGLER: Unhand my foot, sir!

SONDERS: I love your niece!

ZANGLER: *(Outraged)* My knees, sir? *(Mollified)* Oh, my *niece*.

*(Outraged)* Well, my niece and I are not to be prised apart so easily, and nor are hers, I hope I make my meaning clear?

SONDERS: Marie must be mine!

ZANGLER: Never! She is a star out of thy firmament, Sonders!

I am a Zangler, provision merchant to the beau-monde, top board for the Cheesemongers and number three in the Small Bore Club.

SONDERS: Only three?

ZANGLER: Do you suppose I'd let my airedale be hounded up hill and—my heiress be mounted up hill and bank by a truffle-hound—be trifled with and hounded by a mountebank?! Not for all the tea in China! Well, I might

for all the tea in China, or the rice—no, that's ridiculous—the preserved ginger then—no, let's say half the tea, the ginger, a shipment of shark-fin soup double-discounted just to take it off your hands—

SONDERS: All you think about is money!

ZANGLER: All I think about is money! As far as I'm concerned any man who interferes with my Marie might as well have his hand in my till!

SONDERS: I make no secret of the fact that I am not the *éminence grise* of Oriental trade, but I have expectations, and no outstanding debts.

*(A man, a FOREIGNER, visible in the street, starts knocking on the shop door. MARIE has emerged from her cage and goes to deal with it.)*

FOREIGNER: Grus Grott! *(He enters and shakes hands all round.)*

ZANGLER: We're closed for lunch. What expectations?

FOREIGNER: Enschuldigen!

ZANGLER: Closed!

FOREIGNER: Mein heren! Ich nicht ein customer . . .

ZANGLER: What did he say?

MARIE: I don't know, Uncle, I think he's a foreigner.

FOREIGNER: Gut morgen—geshstattensie—bitte shorn—danke shorn . . .

ZANGLER: We're closed! Open two o'clock!

FOREIGNER: Ich comen looken finden Herr Sonders.

ZANGLER: Here! Sonders!

FOREIGNER: Herr Sonders?

ZANGLER: No, *there* Sonders.

FOREIGNER: Herr Sonders? Ich haben ein document.

ZANGLER: He's a creditor!

FOREIGNER: Herr Sonders!

ZANGLER: No debts, eh?

FOREIGNER: Ja—dett!—

SONDERS: Nein, nein—I'm busy. Comen backen in the morgen.

*(SONDERS ushers the FOREIGNER out of the shop. The FOREIGNER is in fact a legal messenger who has come from Belgium to announce the death of SONDERS's rich aunt. He succeeds in this endeavour at the end of the play.)*

ZANGLER: I thought you said you had no debts!

SONDERS: No outstanding debts—run-of-the-mill debts I may have. I probably overlooked my hatter, who is a bit short.

But as for my expectations, Herr Zangler, I have the honour to inform you that I have a rich aunt in Brussels.

ZANGLER: A rich aunt in Brussels! I reel, I totter, I am routed from the field! A rich aunt in Brussels—I'm standing here with my buttons undone and he has a rich aunt in Brussels.

SONDERS: She's going to leave me all her money.

ZANGLER: When is that?

SONDERS: When she's dead, of course.

ZANGLER: Listen, I know Brussels. Your auntie will be sitting up in bed in a lace cap when Belgium produces a composer.

SONDERS: I hope so because while she lives I know she'll make me a liberal allowance.

ZANGLER: A liberal allowance!? How much is that in Brussels? I'm afraid I never do business on the basis of grandiloquent coinage, and in the lexicon of the false prospectus 'a liberal allowance' is the alpha and oh my God, how many times do I have to tell you?—I will not allow my ward to go off and marry abroad.

SONDERS: Then I'll stay here and marry her, if that's your wont.

ZANGLER: And meanwhile in Brussels your inheritance will be eaten to the bone by codicils letting my wont wait upon her will like the poor cat with the haddock.

SONDERS: The what?

ZANGLER: Look to the aunt! Don't waste your time mooning and skulking around my emporium—I'm sending Marie away to a secret address where you will never find her, search how you will.

(*To GERTRUD who has entered with ZANGLER's old uniform.*)

What is it?!

GERTRUD: Twenty-three Carlstrasse, Miss Blumenblatt's.

SONDERS: Twenty-three Carlstrasse . . .! Miss Blumenblatt's!

ZANGLER: (*Spluttering*) You old—you stupid—

GERTRUD: Should I let Marie have the new travelling case?

ZANGLER: —old baggage!

GERTRUD: *Not* the new travelling case . . .

SONDERS: (*Leaving*) My humble respects . . .

GERTRUD: Here is your old uniform. And the new servant has arrived.

SONDERS: Your servant, ma'am!

GERTRUD: His.

(SONDERS goes.)

ZANGLER: You prattling old fool, who asked you to open your big mouth?

GERTRUD: You're upset. I can tell.

ZANGLER: Where is Marie?

GERTRUD: She's upstairs trying on her Scottish travelling outfit you got her cheap from your fancy.

ZANGLER: My fancy? My fiancée! A respectable widow and the Madame of 'Madame Knorr's Fashion House'.

GERTRUD: I thought as much—so it's a betrothal.

ZANGLER: No it isn't, damn your nerve, it's a hat and coat shop!

Now get out and send in the new servant. And don't let Marie out of your sight. If she and Sonders exchange so much as a glance while I'm gone I'll put you on cabbage-water till you can pass it back into the soup-pot without knowing the difference.

(Exit GERTRUD.)

This place is beginning to lose its chic for me. I bestride the mercantile trade of this parish like a colossus, and run a bachelor establishment second to none as far as the eye can see, and I'm surrounded by village idiots and nincompetent poops of every stripe. It's an uphill struggle trying to instil a little tone into this place.

(There is a knock on the door.)

Entrez!

(There is a knock on the door.)

(Furiously) Come in!

(Enter MELCHIOR.)

MELCHIOR: Excuse me, are you the shopkeeper, my lord?

ZANGLER: You do me too much honour and not enough. I am Herr Zangler, purveyor of high-class provisions.

MELCHIOR: I understand you are in desperate need of a servant.

ZANGLER: You understand wrong. There's no shortage of rogues like you, only of masters like me to give them gainful employment.

MELCHIOR: That's classic. And very true. A good servant will keep for years, while masters like you are being ruined every day. How's business by the way?—highly provisional, I trust?

ZANGLER: You strike me as rather impertinent.

MELCHIOR: I was just talking shop. Please disregard it as the inexperience of blushful youth, as the poet said.

ZANGLER: Do you have a reference?

MELCHIOR: No, I just read it somewhere.

ZANGLER: Have you got a testimonial?

MELCHIOR: (*Producing a tattered paper*) I have, sir. And it's a classic, if I say so myself.

ZANGLER: Do you have any experience in the field of mixed merchandise?

MELCHIOR: Definitely, I'm always mixing it.

ZANGLER: Well, I must say, I have never seen a testimonial like it.

MELCHIOR: It's just a bit creased, that's all.

ZANGLER: 'Honest, industrious, enterprising, intelligent, responsible, cheerful, imaginative, witty, well-spoken, modest, in a word classic . . .'

MELCHIOR: When do you want me to start?

ZANGLER: Just a moment, aren't you forgetting the interview?

MELCHIOR: So I am—how much are you paying?

ZANGLER: Six guilders a week, including laundry.

MELCHIOR: I don't do laundry.

ZANGLER: I mean the housekeeper will wash your shirts.

MELCHIOR: That's classic. I like to be clean.

ZANGLER: And board, of course.

MELCHIOR: Clean and bored.

ZANGLER: And lodging.

MELCHIOR: Clean and bored and lodging—

ZANGLER: All included.

MELCHIOR: Ah, board and lodging. How about sharing a bed?

ZANGLER: I won't countenance immorality.

MELCHIOR: Own bed. As for the board, at my last place it was groaning fit to bust, the neighbours used to bang on the walls.

ZANGLER: I assure you, no one goes hungry here: soup, beef, pudding, all the trimmings.

MELCHIOR: Classic. I always have coffee with my breakfast.

ZANGLER: It has never been the custom here for the servant to have coffee.

MELCHIOR: You wouldn't like me to drink liquor from the stock.

ZANGLER: Certainly not.

MELCHIOR: I should prefer to avoid the temptation.

ZANGLER: I'm glad to hear it.

MELCHIOR: Agreed, then.

ZANGLER: What? Well, if you do a good job . . . coffee then.

MELCHIOR: From the pot?

ZANGLER: Ad liberandum.

MELCHIOR: Is that yes or no?

ZANGLER: Yes.

MELCHIOR: Sounds classic. Was there anything else you wanted to ask me?

ZANGLER: No . . . I don't think so.

MELCHIOR: Well, that seems satisfactory. You won't regret this, sir—I have always parted with my employers on the best of terms.

ZANGLER: You have never been sacked?

MELCHIOR: Technically, yes, but only after I have let it be known by subtle neglect of my duties that the job has run its course.

ZANGLER: That's very considerate.

MELCHIOR: I don't like to cause offence by giving notice—in a servant it looks presumptuous.

ZANGLER: That shows modesty.

MELCHIOR: Your humble servant, sir.

ZANGLER: Yes, all right.

MELCHIOR: Classic!

ZANGLER: Only you'll have to stop using that word. It's stupid.

MELCHIOR: There's nothing stupid about the word. It's just the way some people use it without discrimination.

ZANGLER: Do they?

MELCHIOR: Oh yes. It's absolutely classic. What are my duties?

ZANGLER: Your duties are the duties of a servant. To begin with you can make my old uniform look like new—and if that tailor shows his face tell him to go to hell.

(Enter tailor, HUPFER. HUPFER brings with him ZANGLER's new

*uniform on a tailor's dummy. The complete rig-out includes a ridiculous hat with feathers etc., polished riding boots with monstrous shining and very audible spurs, and the uniform itself which is top heavy with gold buttons and braid etc. Leather strapping supports holsters for knife, gun, sword . . . The general effect is sporting and musical. The new uniform is brighter than the old, which is bright. The tailor is only responsible for the clothes. The rest of the stuff is already in the room.)*

HUPFER: Here we are—the masterpiece is ready.

ZANGLER: You managed it, my dear Hupfer! In the nick of time.

MELCHIOR: Go to hell.

ZANGLER: Shut up!

MELCHIOR: (*To the dummy*) Shut up!

HUPFER: Well, with the help of two journeyman tailors I have done the impossible—let me help you into it.

MELCHIOR: Too small.

HUPFER: (*Reacts to MELCHIOR*) I see you have a new servant, Herr Zangler.

ZANGLER: (*Cheerfully*) Oh yes. I woke up this morning feeling like a new man. So I got one.

HUPFER: Trousers.

MELCHIOR: Too tight.

HUPFER (*Wary distaste*) He's a personal servant, is he?

ZANGLER: Yes, he is a bit, but I like to give youth a chance and then I like to kick it down the stairs if it doesn't watch its lip.

MELCHIOR: I worked for a tailor once. I cooked his goose for him.

HUPFER: There we are.

MELCHIOR: Everything went well until I got confused and goosed his cook.

ZANGLER: Pay attention. You may learn something.

MELCHIOR: After that he got a valet stand.

ZANGLER: You'll see how a trouser should fit . . . except it's a bit tight isn't it?

(*It is more than a bit tight.*)

HUPFER: Snug.

ZANGLER: Snug? I'd be in trouble if I knelt down. I'm thinking of my nuptials.

HUPFER: It's the pressing.  
ZANGLER: Exactly. I don't *want* them pressed.  
HUPFER: Try the tunic.  
ZANGLER: I like the frogging.  
HUPFER: Can we please keep our minds on the tunic. Now let me help you.  
ZANGLER: It's somewhat constricted, surely.  
HUPFER: That's the style.  
ZANGLER: But it's cutting me under the arms, the buttons will fly off when I sit down, and I can't breathe.  
HUPFER: It's a uniform, it is not supposed to be a nightshirt.  
ZANGLER: I don't understand it. You took my measurements.  
MELCHIOR: Well that explains it. If God had been a tailor there'd be two and a half feet to the yard and the world would look like a three-cornered hat . . .  
ZANGLER: And it's a day late.  
MELCHIOR: And it would have been a day late. We'd all be on an eight-day week.  
ZANGLER: Shut up.  
MELCHIOR: (*To the dummy*) Shut up.  
ZANGLER: I suppose it will have to do, at a pinch. How do I look?  
MELCHIOR: I'd rather not say.  
ZANGLER: I order you—how do I look?  
MELCHIOR: Classic.  
ZANGLER: Shut up!  
MELCHIOR: (*To HUPFER*) Shut up!  
HUPFER: You dare to let your servant speak to me like that?  
MELCHIOR: In the livery of the Zanglers I am no man's minion.  
ZANGLER: That's well said. What's your name?  
MELCHIOR: Melchior.  
ZANGLER: Melchior, throw this man out.  
HUPFER: Don't touch me! You, sir, received your measurements from nature. The tailor's art is to interpret them to your best advantage, and move the buttons later. My humble respects. I will leave my bill.  
MELCHIOR: (*Thrusting the dummy at HUPFER*) Oh no you won't—you'll take him with you!  
(*Exit HUPFER with dummy.*)

What should I do next?

ZANGLER: There's a coach leaving for town in five minutes. I want you to be on it.

MELCHIOR: It's been a pleasure. I usually get a week's money.

ZANGLER: No, no, my dear fellow, I want you to go to Vienna and engage a private room at the Black and White Chop House. Order a good dinner for two and wait for me there.

MELCHIOR: Dinner for two, wait for you there.

ZANGLER: Tell them it's a celebration—foaming tankards—cold meats—pickles—potato salad—plum dumplings . . .

MELCHIOR: You'll spoil me.

ZANGLER: It's not for you. I'm entertaining my fiancée to a birthday dinner.

MELCHIOR: A previous engagement? My congratulations, Herr Zangler.

ZANGLER: Thank you. She's the Madame of Madame Knorr's Fashion House. You may know it.

MELCHIOR: No, but I think I know the piano player.

ZANGLER: It's a hat shop in Annagasse. Of course she's a millineress in her own right.

MELCHIOR: Enough said. And the shop on top.

ZANGLER: No, she's on top of the shop. What are you talking about?

MELCHIOR: I don't know.

ZANGLER: I'm going to take her to dinner and name the day. You can expect me after the parade.

MELCHIOR: Are we travelling together?

ZANGLER: No, I can't be in a hurry, I'm having trouble with my niece.

MELCHIOR: It's the uniform.

ZANGLER: No, it's the Casanova incarnate. Marie is very vulnerable. If she so much as sets foot outside the door she's going to catch it from me.

MELCHIOR: How long have you had it?

ZANGLER: No. I mean the Don Juan.

MELCHIOR: Has he had it?

ZANGLER: I don't think so. She's in her room trying on her Scottish get-up.

MELCHIOR: I'll work it out later.

ZANGLER: After all I am her uncle.

MELCHIOR: I've worked it out.

ZANGLER: I sent him packing with a flea in his ointment.

MELCHIOR: I think I saw him leave.

ZANGLER: Now here's some money to catch the coach.

MELCHIOR: Can't I meet the rest of your staff?

ZANGLER: There isn't time. Do you understand my requirements?

MELCHIOR: Perfectly.

ZANGLER: Repeat them.

MELCHIOR: Catch the coach—go straight to the Imperial Gardens  
Café—private dinner for two, champagne on ice . . .

ZANGLER: No—no—no—the Black and White Chop House!

MELCHIOR: Sir, I beg you to consider. Madame Knorr is a  
woman of the world, sophisticated, dressed to the nines  
with a hat to knock your eye out and an eye to knock your  
hat off. You want to wine her, dine her and name the day.  
Now does that suggest to you a foaming tankard and a plate  
of cold cuts in the old Black and White?

ZANGLER: (*Slightly puzzled*) Yes it does. What are you getting at?

MELCHIOR: Madame Knorr is not just another hausfrau. Fashion  
is her middle name.

ZANGLER: More or less. Knorr Fashion House. I think I see  
what you mean . . . The Imperial Gardens Café is a  
fashionable place, is it?

MELCHIOR: It's the only place for the quality at the moment.

ZANGLER: The quality . . . Are you sure it is quite refined?

MELCHIOR: Refined?! The ploughman's lunch is six oysters and  
a crème de menthe frappé.

ZANGLER: I see . . . well, perhaps just this once.

MELCHIOR: Leave it to me, sir—champagne—lobster—roast  
fowl—birthday cake—

ZANGLER: Pickles—dumplings—

MELCHIOR: And to finish off, to get her in the mood—

ZANGLER: Perhaps we should have—

MELCHIOR: } (*Together*) A nice bottle of the hard stuff.

ZANGLER: }

MELCHIOR: (*Leaving*) Schnapps!

(*Coach horn. ZANGLER now puts on the rest of his outfit, boots,  
hat, etc.*)

ZANGLER: Well, that seems all right. Just the ticket. First class.

Why do I have a sense of impending disaster? (*He reflects.*)  
Sonders is after my niece and has discovered the secret address where I am sending her to the safe keeping of my sister-in-law Miss Blumenblatt, who has never laid eyes on him, or, for that matter, on Marie either since she was a baby—while I have to leave my business in the charge of my assistant and an apprentice, and follow my new servant, whom I haven't had time to introduce to anyone, to town to join the parade and take my fiancée to dinner in a fashionable restaurant in a uniform I can't sit down in.

One false move and we could have a farce on our hands.  
(*He exits.*)

### *Zangler's shop*

*The shop is closed for lunch. WEINBERL occupies it like a gentleman of leisure. He is writing a letter at the counter. He has a cigar and a glass of wine. CHRISTOPHER is at the door leading to the rest of the house. He is holding a broom, the Cinderella-type of broom, not a yard broom.*  
CHRISTOPHER: He's gone.

(*He joins WEINBERL and is offered a glass. There is also a jar of rollmops to hand.*)

Ah, thank you, Mr Weinberl.

(*WEINBERL continues to write. At CHRISTOPHER's position on the counter there is a stack of torn pages from newspapers used here for wrapping purposes. CHRISTOPHER leans on the stack, reading the top page.*)

Aha, I thought so . . . cocoa is up six points.

WEINBERL: (*Without looking up*) When was that?

CHRISTOPHER: (*Examining the top of the page*) Week before last.

(*WEINBERL signs his letter and blots it.*)

WEINBERL: Does it ever occur to you, Christopher, that we're the backbone of this country?

CHRISTOPHER: You and me, Mr Weinberl?

WEINBERL: The merchant class.

CHRISTOPHER: Ah yes.

WEINBERL: The backbone of the country. The very vertebrae of

continental stability. From coccyx to clavicle—from the Carpathians to . . . where you will . . .

CHRISTOPHER: The toe-nails . . .

WEINBERL: . . . the Tyrol, from Austro to breakfast, and Hungaria to lights out, the merchant class is the backbone of the empire on which the sun shines out of our doings; do you ever say that to yourself?

CHRISTOPHER: Not in so many words, Mr Weinberl.

WEINBERL (*Pulling CHRISTOPHER's forelock*) Well you should.

What is it after all that distinguishes man from beast?

CHRISTOPHER: Not a lot, Mr Weinberl.

WEINBERL: Trade.

CHRISTOPHER: I was thinking that.

WEINBERL: What would we be without trade?

CHRISTOPHER: Closed, Mr Weinberl.

WEINBERL: That's it. The shutters would go up on civilization as we know it. It's the merchant class that holds everything together. Uniting the deep-sea fisherman and the village maiden over a pickled herring on a mahogany counter . . .

CHRISTOPHER: You've put me right off me rollmop.

(*He has been eating one.*)

WEINBERL: . . . uniting the hovels of Havana and the House of Hanover over a box of hand-rolled cigars, and the matchgirl and the church warden in the fall of a lucifer. The pearl fisher and the courtesan are joined at the neck by the merchant class. We are the brokers between invention and necessity, balancing supply and demand on the knife edge of profit and loss. I give you—the merchant class!

CHRISTOPHER: The merchant class!

(*They toast.*)

WEINBERL: We know good times and we know bad. Sometimes trade stumbles on its march. The great machine seems to hesitate, the whirling cogwheels and reciprocating pistons disengage, an unearthly silence descends upon the mercantile world . . . We sit here idly twisting paper into cones, flicking a duster over piles of preserved figs and pyramids of uncertain dates, swatting flies like wanton gods off the north face of the Emmental, and gazing into the street.

And then suddenly with a great roar the engine bursts

into life, and the teeming world of commerce is upon us! Someone wants a pound of coffee, someone else an ounce of capers, *he* wants smoked eel, *she* wants lemons, a skivvy wants rosewater, a fat lady wants butter, but a skinny one wants whalebones, the curate comes for a candy stick, the bailiff roars for a bottle of brandy, and there's a Gadarene rush on the pigs' trotters. At such times the merchant class stands alone, ordering the tumult of desire into the ledgerly rhythm of exchange with a composure as implacable as a cottage loaf. Tongue.

*(During the speech WEINBERL has folded his letter and put it in an envelope. CHRISTOPHER sticks out his tongue and WEINBERL dabs a postage stamp on the tongue and slaps it on the envelope. He seals the envelope with satisfaction.)*

CHRISTOPHER: How is your romance, Herr Weinberl?

WEINBERL: As well as can be expected of a relationship based on pseudonymous correspondence between two post office boxes. One has to proceed cautiously with lonely hearts advertisements. There is a great deal of self-delusion among these women—although I must admit I am becoming very taken with the one who signs herself Elegant And Under Forty. I am thinking of coming out from behind my own nom de plume of Scaramouche. The trouble is, I rather think I have given her the impression that I am more or less the owner of this place, not to mention others like it . . .

CHRISTOPHER: At least you're not a dogsbody like me.

WEINBERL: Dogsbody? You're an apprentice. You've had a valuable training during your five years under me.

CHRISTOPHER: You see things differently from the dizzy heights of chief sales assistant.

WEINBERL: Christopher, Christopher, have a pretzel . . . The dignity of labour embraces servant and master, for every master is a servant too, answerable to the voice of a higher authority.

ZANGLER: *(Outside)* Weinberl!

*(Without seeming to hurry WEINBERL instantly puts things to order.)*

WEINBERL: I thought you said he'd gone.

CHRISTOPHER: He must have changed his mind.

(ZANGLER enters from the house.)

ZANGLER: Ah, there you are. Is it time to open the shop?

WEINBERL: Not quite, Chief. I was just getting everything straight.

ZANGLER: What about this pretzel?

WEINBERL: The pretzel defeated me completely. (To

CHRISTOPHER.) Put it back. Are you going to the parade, Herr Zangler?

ZANGLER: No, I'm going beagling. What do you think?

WEINBERL: I think you're making fun of me, Chief.

ZANGLER: How does it look?

WEINBERL: (*Tactfully*) Snug.

ZANGLER: Do you think it should be let out?

WEINBERL: Not till after dark.

ZANGLER: What?

WEINBERL: No.

ZANGLER: Are you sure?

WEINBERL: I like it, Chief.

CHRISTOPHER: I like it.

ZANGLER: I can't deny it's smart. Did you notice the spurs?

(*The spurs announce themselves every time ZANGLER moves.*)

WEINBERL: The spurs? Oh yes . . .

CHRISTOPHER: I noticed them.

ZANGLER: I'm rather pleased with the effect. I feel like the cake of the week.

WEINBERL: That's very well put, Chief.

ZANGLER: I don't mean the cake of the week—

WEINBERL: Not the cake of the week—the Sheikh of Kuwait—

ZANGLER: No—

CHRISTOPHER: The clerk of the works—

ZANGLER: No!

WEINBERL: The cock of the walk?

ZANGLER: That's the boy. I feel like the cock of the walk.

WEINBERL: You'll be the pride of the Sporting and Benevolent Musical Fusiliers of the Grocers' Company, and what wonderful work they do for the widows and orphans.

ZANGLER: I was just setting off when I suddenly had doubts.

WEINBERL: I assure you, without people like the grocers there'd be no widows and orphans at all.

ZANGLER: No, I mean I had doubts about leaving.

WEINBERL: I don't understand you, Chief.

ZANGLER: My niece and ward is preying on my mind. There's something not quite right there.

CHRISTOPHER: My niece and ward *are* preying on my mind—?

ZANGLER: (*Ignoring him*) Something not quite the ticket. Sonders is a dyed-in-the-wool Don Juan. He's turned Marie's head and for all I know she's already lost it.

WEINBERL: Well, she didn't lose it in shop-hours.

ZANGLER: I'm going to frustrate him.

WEINBERL: Frustration is too good for him, Chief.

ZANGLER: I'm sending Marie away for a few days. You'll have to manage the while the till . . . No—

WEINBERL: To while the time . . .

ZANGLER: No!

WEINBERL: The till the while?

ZANGLER: That's the boy. You'll have to manage the till the while, and do the books at the close of business. I suppose you're prepared to do that?

WEINBERL: Very well prepared if I may say so, Herr Zangler.

ZANGLER: There will be other changes. Prepare yourself for a surprise. I have always prided myself on being a good master who has made every reasonable provision for his staff.

WEINBERL: You have, Chief.

ZANGLER: Well, what would you say to having a mistress?

CHRISTOPHER: One each or sharing?

WEINBERL: Congratulations, Chief! We wish you and your bride every happiness.

ZANGLER: Thank you, thank you.

WEINBERL: May one ask who is the fortunate young lady?

ZANGLER: Actually she's a widow, in business like me. Well not actually like me, far from it, it's a haute couture house catering exclusively to the beau monde with three girls working upstairs. What do you say to that?

WEINBERL: Well, there's not a lot you can say, Chief.

ZANGLER: What the devil is the matter with everybody! That's another thing that was worrying me—leaving the place in charge of you two. I need someone with a proper sense of

responsibility, not a log-rolling counter-clerk and a cack-handed apprentice.

WEINBERL: I'm mortified.

CHRISTOPHER: I'm articted.

WEINBERL: Who have you got in mind, Chief?

ZANGLER: Well, you two of course!

WEINBERL: I mean to put in charge with a sense of responsibility?

ZANGLER: What would you do in my shoes?

WEINBERL: Jingle.

ZANGLER: What?

WEINBERL: Jingle make any difference just for one afternoon, Chief?

ZANGLER: It may be longer. The duration of my absence will depend on how things go at a certain engagement I have this evening. Meanwhile desperate situations call for desperate measures. Master Christopher! Approach!

CHRISTOPHER: He called me Master. Is it the sack?

ZANGLER: I've been paying for your clothes all these years, as you know.

CHRISTOPHER: No, I thought you bought them outright when you took me on.

WEINBERL: Shut up.

ZANGLER: By rights you owe me another six months' apprenticeship, but to celebrate my nuptials I have decided to forgo those months. I am appointing you chief sales assistant.

WEINBERL: Such an honour is granted to such a few. Show your gratitude, then. He's stunned, Chief.

CHRISTOPHER: Chief sales assistant! Oh, Herr Zangler, your bountifulness!

ZANGLER: You may call me Chief. Stop snivelling—where's your—

CHRISTOPHER: Thank you, Chief!

ZANGLER: Thank-you-Chief—no—

WEINBERL (*Worried*) Hang on, Chief—

ZANGLER: Hang-on-Chief—no!—

CHRISTOPHER: Will I have my ceremony, Chief? I've got to have my—

ZANGLER: What?

CHRISTOPHER: Initiation, Chief!

ZANGLER: Bless you. And we must have the ceremony. Raise your right trouser and repeat after me . . . I swear.

CHRISTOPHER: I swear . . .

ZANGLER: Weinberl, do you remember how it goes?

WEINBERL: To strive and to abide.

CHRISTOPHER: To strive and to abide.

WEINBERL: No—I swear by the sacred apron of the Grand Victualler—no—it's been a long time . . .

CHRISTOPHER: (*Rapidly*) I swear by the sacred apron of the Imperial Grand Grocer and by the grocery chain of his office, to strive for his victualler in freehold, to abide by his argument which flows from his premises, to honour his custom, keep up his stock, give credit to few, be credit to all, and not be found wanting when weighed in the scales, so help me God!

ZANGLER: You may jump the counter.

(CHRISTOPHER *jumps*.)

That's that. I will inform you of changes in your duties should any occur to me—except of course that you have to buy your own clothes.

CHRISTOPHER: Thank you, Chief!

ZANGLER: And remember, always give people their change between finger and thumb. Nothing lets down the tone of a place so much as change from the fist.

CHRISTOPHER: Right, Chief.

WEINBERL: Excuse me, Chief. Am I your chief sales assistant or am I not?

ZANGLER: You are not. I have decided to make you my partner. To take effect from the day of my marriage.

WEINBERL: (*Stunned*) Me? Your partner?

ZANGLER: Yes. As a married man who has come into possession of a couture establishment I will be spending more time away from here. It's only right that you should have an interest in the prosperity of the business, and probably cheaper.

WEINBERL: Partner . . .

ZANGLER: Yes, yes, as soon as my bride has consummated my expansion into her turnover you will be my partner. If you

strive and abide you may find yourself in my old uniform.

Now—what shall I do? Shall I go or what?

WEINBERL: What . . . ?

ZANGLER: No, I'll go.

CHRISTOPHER: Good luck, Chief!

ZANGLER: I'm going to join the parade and call on my fiancée—

It's her birthday. I'm hoping to have a little sextet outside her hat shop before I take her to dinner.

CHRISTOPHER: Outside? In the street?

ZANGLER: Yes. I can't help it. I'm a fool to myself when I'm in love. If I'm not back by morning you'll know where I'll be.

CHRISTOPHER: In jail?

ZANGLER: In the milliner's arms.

CHRISTOPHER: Have one for me, Chief!

ZANGLER: What?—No. I will go and plait my truss—no—

CHRISTOPHER: Plight your—

ZANGLER: That's the boy!

(ZANGLER goes.)

WEINBERL: (*In a daze*) Partner . . . partner . . . I'm a partner.

One moment a put-upon counter-clerk, the next a pillar of the continental trading community.

CHRISTOPHER: Chief sales assistant . . . I've always been at the bottom of the ladder and now . . . (*A thought strikes him.*) Who's going to be under me, then?

WEINBERL: Book-keeper—that was the Himalaya of my aspirations, but from the vantage point of partnership I look tolerantly down upon the book-keeper's place as if from a throne of clouds.

CHRISTOPHER: He's a partner and I'm the entire staff. I'll have two masters instead of one, three counting the widow, and the weight of my authority will be felt by the housekeeper's cat.

WEINBERL: And yet—strangely enough—now, now of all times, when fortune has smiled upon me like a lunatic upon a worm in an apple, I feel a sense of . . . (*Pause*) grief.

CHRISTOPHER: That cat is going to wish it had never been born.

WEINBERL: What is happening to me? I feel a loosening of obscure restraints . . . Desires stir in my breast like shifting crates on a badly loaded barrow.

CHRISTOPHER: (*Breaks out*) Oh, Mother, what is the wherefore of it all?!—Whither the striving and how the abiding for a poor boy in the grocery trade? I'm glad she's dead and doesn't see me chained to this counter like a dog to a kennel, knowing nothing of the world except what happens to get wrapped around the next pound of groceries. Seeing the sunrise only from an attic window, and the sunset reflected in a row of spice jars, agog at travellers' tales of paved streets! Oh, Mr Weinberl, I have come into my kingdom and I see that it is the locked room from which you celebrate your escape! And if I have to wait until I am as old as you, *that's longer than I've been alive!*

WEINBERL: (*Soberly*) Beyond the door is another room. The servant is the slave of his master and the master is the slave of his business.

CHRISTOPHER: (*Regarding ZANGLER's old uniform left in the room*)  
Try it on.

WEINBERL: What?

CHRISTOPHER: Try it on.

WEINBERL: No—

CHRISTOPHER: Go on!

WEINBERL: Gertrud might come in—I mustn't!

CHRISTOPHER: All right.

WEINBERL: I daren't!

CHRISTOPHER: All right.

WEINBERL: Dare I? (*He starts to don the uniform.*) If only I could look back on a day when I was fancy free, a real razzle of a day packed with adventure and high jinks, a day to remember when I am a grand-grocer jingling through Vienna in my boots and spurs and the livery of the Grocers' Company or passing the grog and spinning the yarn with the merchant princes of the retail trade, when I could say, 'Oh, I was a gay dog in my day, a real rapscaillon—why, I remember once . . .' but I have nothing to remember.

(*Desperately*) I've got to acquire a past before it's too late!

CHRISTOPHER: Can I come with you, Mr Weinberl?

WEINBERL: Come with me where?

CHRISTOPHER: I want it now!

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