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Samuel French Acting Edition

The Matchmaker

A Farce in Four Acts

by Thornton Wilder

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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The Matchmaker is based upon a comedy by Johann Nestroy, *Einen Jux will er sich machen* (Vienna, 1842) which was in turn based upon an English original, *A Day Well Spent* (London, 1835) by John Oxenford.

The Merchant of Yonkers was produced by Herman Shumlin and directed by Max Reinhardt. The production was designed by Boris Aronson. The cast included Jane Cowl, June Walker, Nydia Westman, Minna Phillips, Percy Waram, Tom Ewell, John Call, Joseph Sweeney, Philip Coolidge, and Edward Nannery. It was first performed on December 12, 1938, at the Colonial Theatre, Boston. The New York engagement opened at the Guild Theatre on December 28, 1938.

The Matchmaker was produced for the Edinburgh Festival by Tennent Productions. It was directed by Dr. Tyrone Guthrie and the production was designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch. The first performance was at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, on August 23, 1954.

The same production opened at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, London, on November 4, 1954. Without changes in the principal roles – with the exception of that of Mr. Vandergelder, which was played successively by Sam Levene, Eddie Mayhoff, and Loring Smith – the play was performed at the Locust Street Theatre, Philadelphia, on October 27, 1955. The cast was as follows:

HORACE VANDERGELDER	 Sam Levene
CORNELIUS HACKL	 Arthur Hill
BARNABY TUCKER	 Alec McCowen
MALACHI STACK	 Patrick McAlinney
AMBROSE KEMPER	 Lee Montague
JOE SCANLON	 Peter Sallis
RUDOLPH	 Timothy Findley
AUGUST	 John Milligan
A CABMAN	 Peter Bayliss
MRS. DOLLY LEVI	 Ruth Gordon
MISS FLORA VAN HUYSEN	 Esme Church
MRS. IRENE MOLLOY	 Eileen Herlie
MINNIE FAY	 Rosamund Greenwood
ERMENGARDE	 Prunella Scales
GERTRUDE	 Henzie Raeburn
MISS VAN HUYSEN'S COOK	 Daphne Newton
A MUSICIAN	 Peter Sallis

The Matchmaker was presented by The Theatre Guild and David Merrick at the Royale Theatre, December 5, 1955. The production was staged by Tyrone Guthrie, with settings and costumes by Tanya Moiseiwitsch.

HORACE VANDERGELDER	Loring Smith
CORNELIUS HACKL	 Arthur Hill
BARNABY TUCKER	 Robert Morse
MALACHI STACK	 Patrick McAlinney
AMBROSE KEMPER	Alexander Davion
JOE SCANLON	 Philip Leeds
RUDOLF	 William Lanteau
AUGUST	 John Milligan
A CABMAN	 Peter Bayliss
MRS. LEVI	 Ruth Gordon
MISS FLORA VAN HUYSEN	 Esme Church
MRS. MOLLOY	Eileen Herlie
MINNIE FAY	 Rosamund Greenwood
ERMENGARDE	 Prunella Scales
GERTRUDE	 Charity Grace
MISS VAN HUYSEN'S COOK	Christine Thomas

CHARACTERS

HORACE VANDERGELDER

AMBROSE KEMPER

JOE SCANLON

GERTRUDE

CORNELIUS HACKL

ERMENGARDE

MALACHI STACK

MRS. LEVI

BARNABY TUCKER

MRS. MOLLOY

MINNIE FAY

A CABMAN

RUDOLF

AUGUST

MISS FLORA VAN HUYSEN

MISS VAN HUYSEN'S COOK

SETTING

ACT I – Vandergelder's house in Yonkers, N.Y

ACT II – Mrs. Molloy's hat shop, New York.

ACT III – The Harmonia Gardens Restaurant on the Battery

ACT IV – Miss Van Huysen's house

TIME

The early 1880s

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The sets are not “solid” but consist of cloths for the back walls and open wings for the side walls. All curtains, pelmets, drapes, etc, are painted. There is a permanent false proscenium painted with bamboo trellis and roses.

A NOTE ON *THE MATCHMAKER*

This publication contains the definitive acting edition of Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker*. It has been prepared for Samuel French by Rosey Strub, under the direction of Tappan Wilder, Thornton Wilder's literary executor.

For the first time in the history of this play, the acting edition now includes Thornton Wilder's definitive dialogue and stage directions previously only available in *Three Plays*. (*Three Plays*, a readers' edition, was first published in 1957 and contains Wilder's definitive texts of *Our Town*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, and *The Matchmaker*.) Farces are notoriously tricky to stage. For this reason, we have supplemented Wilder's definitive stage directions with useful blocking notes from the original Broadway production.

Finally, we made a marvelous discovery while researching Wilder's drafts of *The Matchmaker*: we came across a stage direction which Thornton Wilder had intended to conclude his play, but which had never before appeared in print. Horace Vandergelder brings a box of chocolates down from Yonkers to New York City, and gives it to Mrs. Malloy. After misunderstandings in her hat shop, he takes back his gift and reserves it for Ernestina Simple. When this plan also falls through, he keeps the box for himself, which means that the candy turns up in Act IV in Mrs. Van Husen's living room. Just after Barnaby bids the audience goodnight, Wilder concludes his farce with this long-overlooked direction:

(MISS VAN HUYSEN *has been giving chocolates to the company – she now pops one into BARNABY's mouth.*)

As the entire cast consumes this much-traveled box of bonbons, we are reminded of *The Matchmaker's* playful yet serious theme of "spreading money around," and we take great pleasure in restoring this playful yet serious salute to its place of high honor in the play.

Chocolates and all, may those who are cast as Dolly, Horace, and the rest of the whole madcap company enjoy performing *The Matchmaker* in this new suit of Sunday clothes.

Tappan Wilder,
Sausalito, California

*This play is a rewritten version of the play “The Merchant of Yonkers,” which
was directed in 1938 by Max Reinhardt and is again dedicated to:*

MAX REINHARDT

with deep admiration and indebtedness.

ACT ONE

(Living Room of MR. VANDERGELDER's house, over his hay, feed, and provision store in Yonkers, fifteen miles north of New York City. Articles from the store have overflowed into this room; it has not been cleaned for a long time and is in some disorder, but it is not sordid or gloomy.)

(There are three entrances. One at the center back leads into the principal rooms of the house. One on the back right [all directions are from the point of view of the actors] opens on steps which descend to the street door. One on the left leads to ERMENGARDE's room.)

(In the center of the room is a trap door; below it is a ladder descending to the store below.)

(Behind the trap door and to the left of it is a tall accountant's desk; to the left of it is an old-fashioned stove with a stovepipe going up into the ceiling. Before the desk is a tall stool. On the right of the stage is a table with some chairs about it.)

(HORACE VANDERGELDER's Gladstone bag, packed for a journey, is beside the desk.)

(It is early morning.)

(VANDERGELDER, sixty, choleric, vain, and sly, wears a soiled dressing gown over his uniform trousers; He is seated with a towel about his neck, in the chair at the desk, being shaved by JOE SCANLON, fifty, lanky, mass of gray hair falling into his eyes. VANDERGELDER is smoking a cigar and holding a hand mirror. AMBROSE KEMPER,

thirty, dressed as an "artist," is angrily striding about the room.)

VANDERGELDER. (*Loudly.*) I tell you for the hundredth time you will never marry my niece.

AMBROSE. And I tell you for the thousandth time that I will marry your niece; and right soon, too.

VANDERGELDER. Never!

AMBROSE. Your niece is of age, Mr. Vandergelder. Your niece has consented to marry me – This is a free country, Mr. Vandergelder – not a private kingdom of your own.

(JOE shaving throat. VANDERGELDER rises, moves to the bench, and sits. JOE follows.)

VANDERGELDER. There are no free countries for fools, Mr. Kemper. Thank you for the honor of your visit – good morning.

JOE. Mr. Vandergelder, will you please sit still one minute. If I cut your throat it'll be practically unintentional.

VANDERGELDER. Ermengarde is not for you, nor for anybody else who can't support her.

AMBROSE. I tell you I can support her. I make a very good living.

VANDERGELDER. No, sir! A living is made, Mr. Kemper, by selling something that everybody needs at least once a year.

AMBROSE. Yes but –

VANDERGELDER. Yes, sir! And a million is made by producing something that everybody needs every day. You artists produce something that nobody needs at any time.

AMBROSE. That's not true –

VANDERGELDER. You may sell a picture once in a while, but you'll make no living. Joe, go over there and stamp three times. I want to talk to Cornelius.

(JOE crosses to the trap door and stamps three times.)

AMBROSE. Not only can I support her now, but I have considerable expectations.

VANDERGELDER. *Expectations!* We merchants don't do business with them. I don't keep accounts with people who promise somehow to pay something someday, and I don't allow my niece to marry such people.

AMBROSE. Very well, from now on you might as well know that I regard any way we can find to get married is right and fair. Ermengarde is of age, and there's no law...

(VANDERGELDER rises and crosses toward AMBROSE. JOE SCANLON follows him complainingly and tries to find a chance to cut his hair even while he is standing.)

VANDERGELDER. Law? Let me tell you something, Mr. Kemper; most of the people in the world are fools. The Law is there to prevent crime; we men of sense are there to prevent foolishness. It's I, and not the Law, that will prevent Ermengarde from marrying you, and I've taken some steps already. I've sent her away to get this nonsense out of her head.

AMBROSE. Ermengarde's...not here?

VANDERGELDER. She's gone – east, west, north, south. I thank you for the honor of your visit.

(Enter GERTRUDE – eighty, deaf, half-blind, and very pleased with herself.)

GERTRUDE. Everything's ready, Mr. Vandergelder. Ermengarde and I have just finished packing the trunk.

VANDERGELDER. Hold your tongue!

(JOE is shaving VANDERGELDER's throat, so he can only wave his hands vainly.)

GERTRUDE. Yes, Mr. Vandergelder, Ermengarde's ready to leave. Her trunk's all marked. Care Miss Van Huysen, 8 Jackson Street, New York.

VANDERGELDER. *(Breaking away from JOE.)* Hell and damnation! Didn't I tell you it was a secret?

AMBROSE. (*Picks up hat and coat, kisses GERTRUDE.*) Care Miss Van Huysen, 8 Jackson Street, New York. Thank you very much. Good morning, Mr. Vandergelder. (*Exits.*)

VANDERGELDER. It won't help you, Mr. Kemper – (*To GERTRUDE.*) Deaf! And blind! At least you can do me the favor of being dumb!

GERTRUDE. Chk-chk! Such a temper! Lord save us!

(**CORNELIUS** *puts his head up through the trap door. He is thirty-three; mock-deferential – he wears a black apron and is in his shirt-sleeves.*)

CORNELIUS. Yes, Mr. Vandergelder?

VANDERGELDER. Go in and get my niece's trunk and carry it over to the station. Wait! Gertrude, has Mrs. Levi arrived yet?

(**CORNELIUS** *comes up the trap door, steps into the room, and closes the trap door behind him.*)

GERTRUDE. Don't shout. I can hear perfectly well. Everything's clearly marked. (*Exit left.*)

VANDERGELDER. Have the buggy brought round to the front of the store in half an hour.

CORNELIUS. Yes, Mr. Vandergelder.

VANDERGELDER. This morning I'm joining my lodge parade and this afternoon I'm going to New York. Before I go, I have something important to say to you and Barnaby. Good news. Fact is – I'm going to promote you. How old are you?

CORNELIUS. Thirty-three, Mr. Vandergelder.

VANDERGELDER. What?

CORNELIUS. Thirty-three.

VANDERGELDER. That all? That's a foolish age to be at. I thought you were forty.

CORNELIUS. Thirty-three.

VANDERGELDER. A man's not worth a cent until he's forty. We just pay 'em wages to make mistakes – don't we, Joe?

JOE. You almost lost an ear on it, Mr. Vandergelder.

VANDERGELDER. I was thinking of promoting you to chief clerk.

CORNELIUS. What am I now, Mr. Vandergelder?

VANDERGELDER. You're an impertinent fool, that's what you are. Now, if you behave yourself, I'll promote you from impertinent fool to chief clerk, with a raise in your wages. And Barnaby may be promoted from idiot apprentice to incompetent clerk.

CORNELIUS. Thank you, Mr. Vandergelder.

VANDERGELDER. However, I want to see you again before I go. Go in and get my niece's trunk.

CORNELIUS. Yes, Mr. Vandergelder. *(Exits.)*

VANDERGELDER. Joe – the world's getting crazier every minute. Like my father used to say: the horses'll be taking over the world soon.

(JOE presents mirror to VANDERGELDER.)

JOE. I did what I could, Mr. Vandergelder, what with you flying in and out of the chair. *(He wipes the last of the soap from VANDERGELDER's face.)*

VANDERGELDER. Fine, fine. Joe, you do a fine job, the same fine job you've done me for twenty years. Joe...I've got special reasons for looking my best today...isn't there something a little extra you could do, something a little special? I'll pay you right up to fifty cents – see what I mean? Do some of those things you do to the young fellas. Touch me up, smarten me up a bit.

JOE. All I know is fifteen cents' worth, like usual, Mr. Vandergelder; and that includes everything that's decent to do to a man.

VANDERGELDER. Now hold your horses, Joe – all I meant was...

JOE. I've shaved you for twenty years and you never asked me no such question before.

VANDERGELDER. Hold your horses, I say, Joe! I'm going to tell you a secret. But I don't want you telling it to

that riff-raff down to the barber shop what I'm going to tell you now. All I ask of you is a little extry because I'm thinking of getting married again; and this very afternoon I'm going to New York to call on my intended, a very refined lady.

JOE. Your gettin' married is none of my business, Mr. Vandergelder. I done everything to you I know, and the charge is fifteen cents like it always was, and –

(CORNELIUS enters, crosses left to right and exits, carrying a trunk on his shoulder. ERMENGARDE and GERTRUDE enter from left.)

I don't dye no hair, not even for fifty cents I don't!

VANDERGELDER. Joe Scanlon, get out!

JOE. And lastly, it looks to me like you're pretty rash to judge which is fools and which isn't fools, Mr. Vandergelder. People that's et onions is bad judges of who's et onions and who ain't. Good morning, ladies; good morning, Mr. Vandergelder. *(Exits.)*

VANDERGELDER. Well, what do you want?

ERMENGARDE. *(Twenty-four, pretty, sentimental.)* Uncle! You said you wanted to talk to us.

VANDERGELDER. Oh yes, Gertrude, go and get my parade regalia – the uniform for my lodge parade.

GERTRUDE. What? *(He mimes a march.)* Oh yes. Lord have mercy! *(Exit GERTRUDE back center.)*

VANDERGELDER. Ermengarde. I had a talk with that artist of yours. He's a fool.

(ERMENGARDE starts to cry.)

Weeping! Weeping! You can go down and weep for a while in New York where it won't be noticed.

(He sits on desk chair, puts tie round neck, and calls her over to tie it for him.)

Ermengarde! I told him that when you were old enough to marry you'd marry someone who could support you.

I've done you a good turn. You'll come and thank me when you're fifty.

ERMENGARDE. But, Uncle, I love him!

VANDERGELDER. I tell you you don't.

ERMENGARDE. But I *do*!

VANDERGELDER. And I tell you you don't. Leave those things to me.

ERMENGARDE. If I don't marry Ambrose I know I'll die.

VANDERGELDER. What of?

ERMENGARDE. A broken heart.

VANDERGELDER. Never heard of it. Mrs. Levi is coming in a moment to take you to New York. You are going to stay two or three weeks with Miss Van Huysen, an old friend of your mother's.

(GERTRUDE *re-enters with coat, sash, and sword.*

Enter from the street, right, MALACHI STACK.)

You're not to receive any letters except from me. I'm coming to New York myself today and I'll call on you tomorrow. (*To MALACHI.*) Who are you?

MALACHI. (*Fifty, sardonic. Apparently innocent smile; pretense of humility.*) Malachi Stack, your honor. I heard you wanted an apprentice in the hay, feed, provision and hardware business.

VANDERGELDER. An apprentice at your age?

MALACHI. Yes, your honor; I bring a lot of experience to it.

VANDERGELDER. Have you any letters of recommendation?

MALACHI. (*Extending a sheaf of soiled papers.*) Yes, indeed, your honor! First class recommendation.

VANDERGELDER. Ermengarde! Are you ready to start?

ERMENGARDE. Yes.

VANDERGELDER. Well, go and get ready some more. (*She turns to go.*) Ermengarde! Let me know the minute Mrs. Levi gets here.

ERMENGARDE. Yes, Uncle Horace.

(ERMENGARDE *and* GERTRUDE *exit.*)

VANDERGELDER. (*Examines the letters, putting them down one by one.*) I don't want an able seaman. Nor a typesetter. And I don't want a hospital cook.

MALACHI. No, your honor, but it's all experience. Excuse me! (*Selects a letter.*) This one is from your former partner, Joshua Van Tuyl in Albany. (*He puts letters from table back into pocket.*)

VANDERGELDER. "...For the most part honest and reliable...occasionally willing and diligent." There seems to be a certain amount of hesitation about these recommendations.

MALACHI. Business men aren't writers, your honor. There's only one business man in a thousand that can write a good letter of recommendation, your honor. Mr. Van Tuyl sends his best wishes and wants to know if you can use me in the provision and hardware business.

VANDERGELDER. Not so fast, not so fast! What's this "your honor" you use so much?

MALACHI. Mr. Van Tuyl says you're President of the Hudson River Provision Dealers' Recreational, Musical and Burial Society.

VANDERGELDER. I am; but there's no "your honor" that goes with it. Why did you come to Yonkers?

MALACHI. I heard that you'd had an apprentice that was a good-for-nothing, and that you were at your wits' end for another.

VANDERGELDER. Wits' end, wits' end! There's no dearth of good-for-nothing apprentices.

MALACHI. That's right, Mr. Vandergelder. It's employers there's a dearth of. Seems like you hear of a new one dying every day.

VANDERGELDER. What's that? Hold your tongue. I see you've been a barber, and a valet too. Why have you changed your place so often?

MALACHI. Changed my place, Mr. Vandergelder? When a man's interested in experience...

VANDERGELDER. Do you drink?

MALACHI. No, thanks. I've just had breakfast.

VANDERGELDER. I didn't ask you whether – idiot! I asked you if you were a drunkard.

MALACHI. No, sir! No! Why, looking at it from all sides I don't even like liquor.

VANDERGELDER. Well, if you keep on looking at it from all sides, out you go. Remember that. Here. (*Gives him remaining letters.*) With all your faults, I'm going to give you a try.

MALACHI. You'll never regret it, Mr. Vandergelder. You'll never regret it.

VANDERGELDER. Now today I want to use you in New York. I judge you know your way around New York?

MALACHI. Do I know New York? Mr. Vandergelder, I know every hole and corner in New York.

VANDERGELDER. Here's a dollar. A train leaves in a minute. Take that bag to the Central Hotel on Water Street, have them save me a room. Wait for me. I'll be there about four o'clock.

MALACHI. Yes, Mr. Vandergelder. (*Picks up the bag, starts out, then comes back.*) Oh, but first I'd like to meet the other clerks I'm to work with.

VANDERGELDER. You haven't time. Hurry now. The station's across the street.

MALACHI. Yes, sir. (*Away – then back once more.*) You'll see, sir, you'll never regret it...

VANDERGELDER. I regret it already. Go on. Off with you.

(**MALACHI** exits with bag.)

(*The following speech is addressed to the audience. During it VANDERGELDER takes off his dressing gown, puts on his scarlet sash, his sword, and his bright-colored coat. He is already wearing light blue trousers with a red stripe down the sides.*)

Ninety-nine percent of the people in the world are fools and the rest of us are in great danger of contagion. But I wasn't always free of foolishness as I am now. I was

once young, which was foolish; I fell in love, which was foolish; and I got married, which was foolish; and for a while I was poor, which was more foolish than all the other things put together. Then my wife died, which was foolish of her; I grew older which was sensible of me; then I became a rich man which is as sensible as it is rare. Since you see I'm a man of sense, I guess you were surprised to hear that I'm planning to get married again. Well, I've two reasons for it. In the first place, I like my house run with order, comfort and economy. That's a woman's work; but even a woman can't do it well if she's merely being paid for it. In order to run a house well, a woman must have the feeling that she owns it. Marriage is a bribe to make a housekeeper think she's a householder. Did you ever watch an ant carry a burden twice its size? What excitement! What patience! What will! Well, that's what I think of when I see a woman running a house. What giant passions in those little bodies – what quarrels with the butcher for the best cut – what fury at discovering a moth in a cupboard! Believe me! – If women could harness their natures to something bigger than a house and a baby-carriage – tck tck! – they'd change the world. And the second reason, ladies and gentlemen? Well, I see by your faces you've guessed it already. There's nothing like mixing with women to bring out all the foolishness in a man of sense. And that's a risk I'm willing to take. I've just turned sixty and I've just laid side by side the last dollar of my first half-million. So if I should lose my head a little, I still have enough money to buy it back. After many years' caution and hard work I have the right to a little risk and adventure and I'm thinking of getting married. Yes, like all you other fools, I'm willing to risk a little security for a certain amount of adventure. Think it over.

(**VANDERGELDER** exits back center. **AMBROSE** enters from the street, crosses left, and whistles softly. **ERMENGARDE** enters from left.)

ERMENGARDE. Ambrose! If my uncle saw you!

AMBROSE. Sh! Get your hat.

ERMENGARDE. My hat!

AMBROSE. Quick! Your trunk's at the station. Now quick!

We're running away.

ERMENGARDE. Running away!

AMBROSE. Sh!

ERMENGARDE. Where?

AMBROSE. To New York. To get married.

ERMENGARDE. Oh, Ambrose, I can't do that. Ambrose dear – it wouldn't be proper.

AMBROSE. Listen. I'm taking you to my friend's house. His wife will take care of you.

ERMENGARDE. But, Ambrose, a girl can't go on a train with a man. I can see you don't know anything about girls.

AMBROSE. But I'm telling you we're going to get married!

ERMENGARDE. Married! But what would *Uncle* say?

AMBROSE. We don't care –! We don't care what Uncle'd say – we're eloping.

ERMENGARDE. Ambrose Kemper! How can you use such an awful word!

AMBROSE. Ermengarde, you have the soul of a field mouse.

ERMENGARDE. (*Crying.*) Ambrose, why do you say such cruel things to me?

(*Enter MRS. LEVI from the street. She stands listening.*)

AMBROSE. For the last time I beg you – get your hat and coat. The train leaves in a few minutes. Ermengarde, we'll get married tomorrow...

ERMENGARDE. Oh, Ambrose! I see you don't understand anything about weddings. Ambrose, don't you *respect* me...?

MRS. LEVI. (*Uncertain age; mass of sandy hair; impoverished elegance; large, shrewd but generous nature, an assumption of worldly cynicism conceals a tireless, amused enjoyment of life.*)

She carries a handbag and a small brown paper bag.) Good morning, darling girl – How are you? *(They kiss.)*

ERMENGARDE. Oh, good morning, Mrs. Levi.

MRS. LEVI. And who is this gentleman who is so devoted to you?

ERMENGARDE. This is Mr. Kemper, Mrs. Levi. Ambrose, this is... Mrs. Levi...she's an old friend...

MRS. LEVI. Mrs. Levi, born Gallagher. Very happy to meet you, Mr. Kemper.

AMBROSE. Good morning, Mrs. Levi.

MRS. LEVI. Mr. Kemper, *the artist!* Delighted! Mr. Kemper, may I say something very frankly?

AMBROSE. Yes, Mrs. Levi.

MRS. LEVI. This thing you were planning to do is a very great mistake.

ERMENGARDE. Oh, Mrs. Levi, please explain to Ambrose – of *course!* I want to marry him, but to *elope!* ...*How...*

MRS. LEVI. Now, my dear girl, you go in and keep one eye on your uncle. I wish to talk to Mr. Kemper for a moment. You give us a warning when you hear your Uncle Horace coming...

ERMENGARDE. Ye-es, Mrs. Levi.

(ERMENGARDE exits, back center.)

MRS. LEVI. Mr. Kemper. I was this dear girl's mother's oldest friend. Believe me, I am on your side. I hope you two will be married very soon, and I think I can say I can be of real *service* to you. Mr. Kemper, I always go right to the point.

AMBROSE. What is the point, Mrs. Levi?

MRS. LEVI. Mr. Vandergelder is a very rich man, Mr. Kemper, and Ermengarde is his only relative.

AMBROSE. But I am not interested in Mr. Vandergelder's money. I have enough to support a wife and family.

MRS. LEVI. Enough? How much is enough when one is thinking about children and the future? The future is the most expensive luxury in the world, Mr. Kemper.

AMBROSE. Mrs. Levi, what is the point?

MRS. LEVI. Believe me, Mr. Vandergelder wishes to get rid of Ermengarde, and if you follow my suggestions he will even permit her to marry you. You see, Mr. Vandergelder is planning to get married himself.

AMBROSE. What? That monster?

MRS. LEVI. Mr. Kemper!

AMBROSE. Married! To you, Mrs. Levi?

MRS. LEVI. Oh, no, no... NO! I am merely arranging it. I am helping him find a suitable bride.

AMBROSE. For Mr. Vandergelder there are no suitable brides.

MRS. LEVI. I think we can safely say that Mr. Vandergelder will be married to someone by the end of next week.

AMBROSE. Well, what are you suggesting, Mrs. Levi?

MRS. LEVI. I am taking Ermengarde to New York on the next train. I shall not take her to Miss Van Huysen's as is planned; I shall take her to my house. I wish you to call for her at my house at five-thirty. Here is my card.

AMBROSE. "Mrs. Dolly Gallagher Levi. Varicose veins reduced."

MRS. LEVI. (*Trying to take back the card.*) I beg your pardon...

AMBROSE. (*Holding up the card.*) I beg your pardon. "Consultations Free."

MRS. LEVI. I meant to give you my other card. Here.

AMBROSE. "Mrs. Dolly Gallagher Levi. Aurora Hosiery. Instruction in the guitar and mandolin." You do all these things, Mrs. Levi?

MRS. LEVI. Two and two make four, Mr. Kemper – always did. So you will come to my house at five-thirty. At about six I shall take you both with me to the Harmonia Gardens Restaurant on the Battery; Mr. Vandergelder will be there and everything will be arranged.

AMBROSE. How?

MRS. LEVI. Oh, I don't know. One thing will lead to another.

AMBROSE. How do I know that I can trust you, Mrs. Levi?
You could easily make our situation worse.

MRS. LEVI. Mr. Kemper, your situation could not possibly be worse.

AMBROSE. I wish I knew what you get out of this, Mrs. Levi.

MRS. LEVI. That is a very proper question. I get two things: profit and pleasure.

AMBROSE. How?

MRS. LEVI. Mr. Kemper, I am a woman who arranges things. At present I am arranging Mr. Vandergelder's domestic affairs. Out of it I get – shall we call it: little pickings? I need little pickings, Mr. Kemper, and especially just now, when I haven't got my train-fare back to New York. You see: I am frank with you.

AMBROSE. That's your profit, Mrs. Levi; but where do you get your pleasure?

MRS. LEVI. My pleasure? Mr. Kemper, when you artists paint a hillside or a river you change everything a little, you make thousands of little changes, don't you? Nature is never completely satisfactory and must be corrected. Well, I'm like you artists. Life as it is is never quite interesting enough for me – I'm bored, Mr. Kemper, with life as it is – and so I do things. I put my hand in here, and I put my hand in there, and I watch and I listen – and often I am very much amused.

AMBROSE. (*Rises.*) Not in my affairs, Mrs. Levi.

MRS. LEVI. Wait, I haven't finished. There's another thing. I'm very interested in this household here – in Mr. Vandergelder and all that idle, frozen money of his. I don't like the thought of it lying in great piles, useless, motionless, in the bank, Mr. Kemper. Money should circulate like rain water. It should be flowing down among the people, through dressmakers and restaurants and cabmen, setting up a little business here, and furnishing a good time there. Do you see what I mean?

AMBROSE. Yes, I do.

MRS. LEVI. New York should be a very happy city, Mr. Kemper, but it isn't. My late husband came from Vienna; now there's a city that understands this. I want New York to be more like Vienna and less like a collection of nervous and tired ants. And if you and Ermengarde get a good deal of Mr. Vandergelder's money, I want you to see that it starts flowing in and around a lot of people's lives. And for that reason I want you to come with me to the Harmonia Gardens Restaurant tonight.

(Enter ERMENGARDE.)

ERMENGARDE. Mrs. Levi, Uncle Horace is coming.

MRS. LEVI. Mr. Kemper, I think you'd better be going...

(AMBROSE crosses to the trap door and disappears down the ladder, closing the trap as he goes.)

Darling girl, Mr. Kemper and I have had a very good talk. You'll see: Mr. Vandergelder and I will be dancing at your wedding very soon –

(Enter VANDERGELDER at back. He has now added a splendid plumed hat to his costume and is carrying a standard or small flag bearing the initials of his lodge.)

Oh, Mr. Vandergelder, how handsome you look! You take my breath away. Yes, my dear girl, I'll see you soon.

(ERMENGARDE exits back center.)

Oh, Mr. Vandergelder, I wish Irene Molloy could see you now. But then! I don't know what's come over you lately. You seem to be growing younger every day.

VANDERGELDER. Allowing for exaggeration, Mrs. Levi. If a man eats careful there's no reason why he should look old.

MRS. LEVI. You never said a truer word.

VANDERGELDER. I'll never see fifty-five again.

MRS. LEVI. Fifty-five! Why, I can see at a glance that you're the sort that will be stamping about at a hundred and

eating five meals a day, like my Uncle Harry. At fifty-five my Uncle Harry was a mere boy. I'm a judge of hands, Mr. Vandergelder – show me your hand. (*Looks at it.*) Lord in heaven! What a life line!

VANDERGELDER. Where?

MRS. LEVI. From *here* to *here*. It runs right off your hand. I don't know where it goes. They'll have to hit you on the head with a mallet. They'll have to stifle you with a sofa pillow. You'll bury us all!

However, to return to our business – Mr. Vandergelder I suppose you've changed your mind again. I suppose you've given up all idea of getting married.

VANDERGELDER. (*Complacently.*) Not at all, Mrs. Levi. I have news for you.

MRS. LEVI. News?

VANDERGELDER. Mrs. Levi, I've practically decided to ask Mrs. Molloy to be my wife.

MRS. LEVI. (*Taken aback.*) You have?

VANDERGELDER. Yes, I have.

MRS. LEVI. Oh, you have! Well, I guess that's just about the best news I ever heard. So there's nothing more for me to do but wish you every happiness under the sun and say good-bye. (*Crosses as if to leave.*)

VANDERGELDER. Well – Mrs. Levi – Surely I thought –

MRS. LEVI. Well, I did have a little suggestion to make – but I won't. You're going to marry Irene Molloy and that closes the matter.

VANDERGELDER. What suggestion was that, Mrs. Levi?

MRS. LEVI. Well – I *had* found *another* girl for you.

VANDERGELDER. Another?

MRS. LEVI. The most wonderful girl, the ideal wife.

VANDERGELDER. Another, eh? What's her name?

MRS. LEVI. Her name?

VANDERGELDER. Yes!

MRS. LEVI. (*Groping for it.*) Err...er...her name! – Ernestina – Simple. *Miss* Ernestina Simple. But now of course

all that's too late. After all, you're engaged – You're practically engaged to marry Irene Molloy.

VANDERGELDER. Oh, I ain't engaged to Mrs. Molloy!

MRS. LEVI. Nonsense! You can't break poor Irene's heart now and change to another girl... When a man at your time of life calls four times on an attractive widow like that – and sends her a pot of geraniums – that's practically an engagement!

VANDERGELDER. That ain't an engagement!

MRS. LEVI. And yet –! If only you were free! I've found this treasure of a girl. Every moment I felt like a traitor to Irene Molloy – but let me tell you: I couldn't help it. I told this girl all about you, just as though you were a free man. Isn't that dreadful? The fact is: she has fallen in love with you already.

VANDERGELDER. Ernestina?

MRS. LEVI. Ernestina Simple.

VANDERGELDER. Ernestina Simple.

MRS. LEVI. Of course she's a very different idea from Mrs. Molloy, Ernestina is. Like her name – simple, domestic, practical.

VANDERGELDER. Can she cook?

MRS. LEVI. Cook, Mr. Vandergelder? I've had two meals from her hands, and – as I live – I don't know what I've done that God should reward me with such meals.

[The following passage – adapted from a scene in Molière's L'Avare – has been cut in recent performances:]

MRS. LEVI. (*Continues.*) Her duck! Her steak!

VANDERGELDER. Eh! Eh! In this house we don't eat duck and steak every day, Mrs. Levi.

MRS. LEVI. But didn't I tell you? – that's the wonderful part about it. Her duck – what was it? Pidgeon! I'm alive to tell you. I don't know how she does it. It's a secret that's come down in her family. The greatest chefs would give their right hands to know it. And the steaks? Shoulders

of beef – four cents a pound. Dogs wouldn't eat it. But when Ernestina passes her hands over it –!!

VANDERGELDER. Allowing for exaggeration, Mrs. Levi.

MRS. LEVI. No exaggeration.]

I'm the best cook in the world myself, and I *know* what's good.

VANDERGELDER. Hm. How old is she, Mrs. Levi?

MRS. LEVI. Nineteen, well – say twenty.

VANDERGELDER. Twenty, Mrs. Levi? Girls of twenty are apt to favor young fellows of their own age.

MRS. LEVI. But you don't listen to me. And you don't know the girl. Mr. Vandergelder, she has a positive horror of flighty, brainless young men. A fine head of gray hair, she says, is worth twenty shined up with goose-grease. No, sir. "I like a man that's *settled*" – in so many words she said it.

VANDERGELDER. That's...that's not usual, Mrs. Levi.

MRS. LEVI. Usual? I'm not wearing myself to the bone hunting up *usual* girls to interest you, Mr. Vandergelder. Usual, indeed. Listen to me. Do you know the sort of pictures she has on her wall? Is it any of these young Romeos and Lochinvars? No! – It's Moses on the mountain – that's what she's got. If you want to make her happy, you give her a picture of Methuselah surrounded by his grandchildren. That's my advice to you.

[Following passage – also based on Molière – has generally been cut in performance:

VANDERGELDER. I hope...hm...that she has some means, Mrs. Levi. I have a large household to run.

MRS. LEVI. Ernestina? She'll bring you five thousand dollars a year.

VANDERGELDER. Eh! Eh!

MRS. LEVI. Listen to me, Mr. Vandergelder. You're a man of sense, I hope. A man that can reckon. In the first place, she's an orphan. She's been brought up with a

great saving of food. What does she eat herself? Apples and lettuce. It's what she's been used to eat and what she likes best. She saves you two thousand a year right there. Secondly, she makes her own clothes – out of old table clothes and window curtains. And she's the best-dressed woman in Brooklyn this minute. She saves you a thousand dollars right there. Thirdly, her health is of iron –

VANDERGELDER. But Mrs. Levi, that's not money in the pocket.

MRS. LEVI. We're talking about marriage, aren't we, Mr. Vandergelder? The money she saves while she's in Brooklyn is none of your affair – but if she were your wife that would be *money*. Yes, sir, that's money.]

VANDERGELDER. What about her family?

MRS. LEVI. Her father? – God be good to him! He was the best – what am I trying to say? – The best undertaker in Brooklyn, respected, esteemed. He knew all the best people – knew them well, even before they died. So – well, that's the way it is.

(Lowering her voice, intimately.)

Now let me tell you a little more of her appearance. Can you hear me: as I say, a beautiful girl, beautiful. I've seen her go down the street – you know what I mean? – The young men get dizzy. They have to lean against lampposts. And she? Modest, eyes on the ground – I'm not going to tell you any more... Couldn't you come over to New York today?

VANDERGELDER. I was thinking of coming to New York this afternoon...

MRS. LEVI. You were? Well now, I wonder if something could be arranged – oh, she's so eager to see you! Let me see...

VANDERGELDER. Could I... Mrs. Levi, could I give you two ladies a little dinner, maybe?

MRS. LEVI. Really, come to think of it, I don't see where I could get the time. I'm so busy over that wretched

lawsuit of mine. Yes. If I win it, I don't mind telling you, I'll be what's called a very rich woman. I'll own half of Long Island, that's a fact. But just now I'm at my wits' end for a little help, just enough money to finish it off. My wits' end!

(She looks in her handbag. In order not to hear this, VANDERGELDER has a series of coughs, sneezes, and minor convulsions.)

MRS. LEVI. But perhaps I could arrange a little dinner; I'll see. Yes, for that lawsuit all I need is fifty dollars, and Staten Island's as good as mine. I've been trotting all over New York for you, trying to find you a suitable wife.

VANDERGELDER. Fifty dollars!!

MRS. LEVI. Two whole months I've been...

VANDERGELDER. Fifty dollars, Mrs. Levi...is no joke.

(Producing purse.)

I don't know where money's gone to these days. It's in hiding... There's twenty...well, there's twenty-five. I can't spare no more, not now I can't.

MRS. LEVI. Well, this will help – will help somewhat. Now let me tell you what we'll do. I'll bring Ernestina to that restaurant on the Battery. You know it: the Harmonia Gardens. It's good, but it's not flashy. Now Mr. Vandergelder, I think it'd be nice if just this once you'd order a real nice dinner. I guess you can afford it.

VANDERGELDER. Well, just this once.

MRS. LEVI. A chicken wouldn't hurt.

VANDERGELDER. Chicken!! – Well, just this once.

MRS. LEVI. And a little wine.

VANDERGELDER. Wine? Well, just this once.

MRS. LEVI. Now about Mrs. Molloy – what do you think? Shall we call that subject closed?

VANDERGELDER. No, not at all, Mrs. Levi, I want to have dinner with...with Miss...

MRS. LEVI. Simple.

VANDERGELDER. With Miss Simple; but first I want to make another call on Mrs. Molloy.

MRS. LEVI. Dear, dear, dear! And Miss Simple? What races you make me run! Very well; I'll meet you on one of those benches in front of Mrs. Molloy's hat shop at four-thirty, as usual.

(Trap door rises, and CORNELIUS's head appears.)

CORNELIUS. The buggy's here, ready for the parade, Mr. Vandergelder.

VANDERGELDER. Call Barnaby. I want to talk to both of you.

CORNELIUS. Yes, Mr. Vandergelder. *(Exit CORNELIUS down trap door. Leaves trap open.)*

MRS. LEVI. Now do put your thoughts in order, Mr. Vandergelder. I can't keep upsetting and disturbing the finest women in New York City unless you mean business.

VANDERGELDER. Oh, I mean business all right!

MRS. LEVI. I hope so. Because, you know, you're playing a very *dangerous* game.

VANDERGELDER. Dangerous? – Dangerous, Mrs. Levi?

MRS. LEVI. Of course, it's dangerous – and there's a name for it! You're tampering with these women's affections, aren't you? And the only way you can save yourself now is to be married to *someone* by the end of next week. So think that over!

(MRS. LEVI exits center back. Enter CORNELIUS and BARNABY by the trap door.)

VANDERGELDER. This morning I'm joining my lodge parade, and this afternoon I'm going to New York. When I come back there are going to be some changes in the house. I'll tell you what the change is, but I don't want you discussing it amongst yourselves: you're going to have a mistress.

BARNABY. *(Seventeen; wide-eyed innocence; wearing a green apron.)* I'm too young, Mr. Vandergelder!!

VANDERGELDER. Not yours! Death and damnation! Not yours, idiot – *mine!* (*Then, realizing:*) Hey! Hold your tongue until you're spoken to! I'm thinking of getting married.

CORNELIUS. (*Crosses, hand outstretched.*) Many congratulations, Mr. Vandergelder, and my compliments to the lady.

VANDERGELDER. That's none of your business. Now go back to the store. Have you got any questions you want to ask before I go?

(The boys start down the ladder, BARNABY first.)

CORNELIUS. Mr. Vandergelder – er – Mr. Vandergelder, does the chief clerk get one evening off every week?

VANDERGELDER. So that's the way you begin being chief clerk, is it? When I was your age I got up at five; I didn't close the shop until ten at night, and then I put in a good hour at the account books. The world's going to pieces. You elegant ladies lie in bed until six and at nine o'clock at night you rush to close the door so fast the line of customers bark their noses. No, sir – you'll attend to the store as usual, and on Friday and Saturday nights you'll remain open until ten – now hear what I say! This is the first time I've been away from the store overnight. When I come back I want to hear that you've run the place perfectly in my absence. If I hear of any foolishness, I'll discharge you. An evening free! Do you suppose that *I* had evenings free?

(At the top of his complacency.)

If I'd had evenings free I wouldn't be what I am now!

(He marches out, right.)

BARNABY. (*Watching him go.*) The horses nearly ran away when they saw him. What's the matter, Cornelius?

CORNELIUS. Chief clerk! Promoted from chief clerk to chief clerk.

BARNABY. Don't you like it?

CORNELIUS. Chief clerk! – And if I'm good, in ten years I'll be promoted to chief clerk again. Thirty-three years old and I still don't get an evening free? When am I going to begin to live?

BARNABY. Well – eh – you can begin to live on Sundays, Cornelius.

CORNELIUS. That's not living. Twice to church, and old Wolf-trap's eyes on the back of my head the whole time. And as for holidays! What did we do last Christmas? All those canned tomatoes went bad and exploded. We had to clean up the mess all afternoon. Was that living?

BARNABY. (*Holding his nose at the memory of the bad smell.*) No!!

CORNELIUS. (*Rising with sudden resolution.*) Barnaby, how much money have you got – where you can get at it?

BARNABY. Oh – three dollars. Why, Cornelius?

CORNELIUS. You and I are going to New York.

BARNABY. Cornelius!! We can't! Close the store?

CORNELIUS. Some more rotten tomatoes are going to explode.

BARNABY. Holy cabooses! How do you know?

CORNELIUS. I know they're rotten. All you have to do is to light a match under them. They'll make such a smell that customers can't come into the place for twenty-four hours. That'll get us an evening free. We're going to New York too, Barnaby, we're going to live! I'm going to have enough adventures to last me until I'm *partner*. So go and get your Sunday clothes on.

BARNABY. Wha-a-a-t?

CORNELIUS. Yes, I mean it. We're going to have a good meal; and we're going to be in danger; and we're going to get almost arrested; and we're going to spend all our money.

BARNABY. Holy cabooses!

CORNELIUS. And one more thing: we're not coming back to Yonkers until we've kissed a girl.

BARNABY. Kissed a girl! Cornelius, you can't do that. You don't know any girls.

CORNELIUS. I'm thirty-three. I've got to begin sometime.

BARNABY. I'm only seventeen, Cornelius. It isn't so urgent for me.

CORNELIUS. Don't start backing down now. If the worst come to the worst and we get discharged from here we can always join the Army.

BARNABY. Uh – did I hear you say that you'd be old Wolf-trap's partner?

CORNELIUS. How can I help it? He's getting old. If you go to bed at nine and open the store at six, you get promoted upwards whether you like it or not.

BARNABY. My! Partner!

CORNELIUS. Oh, there's no way of getting away from it. You and I will be Vandergelders.

BARNABY. I? Oh no – I may rise a little, but I'll never be a Vandergelder.

CORNELIUS. Listen – everybody thinks when he gets rich he'll be a different kind of rich person from the rich people he sees around him; later on he finds out there's only one kind of rich person, and he's it.

BARNABY. Oh, but I'll –

CORNELIUS. No. The best of all would be a person who has all the good things of a poor person, and all the good meals a rich person has, but that's never been known. No, you and I are going to be Vandergelders; all the more reason then, for us to try and get some living and some adventure into us now – will you come, Barnaby?

BARNABY. (*In a struggle with his fears, a whirlwind of words.*) But Wolf-trap – KRR-pt, Gertrude-KRR-pt –

(*With a sudden cry of agreement.*)

Yes, Cornelius!

(*Enter MRS. LEVI, ERMENGARDE, and GERTRUDE from back center. The boys start down the ladder, CORNELIUS last.*)

MRS. LEVI. Mr. Hackl, is the trunk waiting at the railroad station?

CORNELIUS. Yes, Mrs. Levi. (*Closes the trap door.*)

MRS. LEVI. Take a last look, Ermengarde.

ERMENGARDE. What?

MRS. LEVI. Take a last look at your girlhood home, dear. I remember when I left my home. I gave a whinny like a young colt, and off I went.

(**ERMENGARDE and GERTRUDE** exit.)

ERMENGARDE. (*As they go.*) Oh Gertrude, do you think I ought to get married this way? A young girl has to be so careful!

MRS. LEVI. (*She is alone. She addresses the audience.*) You know, I think I'm going to have this room with *blue* wallpaper, – yes, in blue! (*Hurries out after the others.*)

BARNABY. (*Comes up trap door, looks off right, then lies on the floor, gazing down through the trap door.*) All clear up here, Cornelius! Cornelius – hold the candle steady a minute – the bottom row's all right – but try the top now... they're swelled up like they are ready to bust! (*Bang.*) Holy CABOOSSES! (*Bang, bang.*) Cornelius! I can smell it up here! (*Bang, bang.*)

(*Rises and dances about, holding his nose.*)

CORNELIUS. (*Rushing up the trap door.*) Get into your Sunday clothes, Barnaby. We're going to New York!

(*As they run out...there is a big explosion. A shower of tomato cans comes up from below, as –.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

ACT TWO

(**MRS. MOLLOY**'s hat store, New York City.)

*(There are two entrances. One door at the extreme right of the back wall, to **MRS. MOLLOY**'s workroom; one at the back left corner, to the street. The whole left wall is taken up with show windows, filled with hats. It is separated from the shop by a low brass rail, hung with net; during the act both **MRS. MOLLOY** and **BARNABY** stoop under the rail and go into the shop window. By the street door stands a large cheval glass. In the middle of the back wall is a large wardrobe or clothes cupboard, filled with ladies' coats, large enough for **CORNELIUS** to hide in. At the left, beginning at the back wall, between the wardrobe and the workroom door, a long counter extends toward the audience, almost to the footlights. In the center of the room is a large round table with a low-hanging red cloth. There is a small gilt chair by the wardrobe and two chairs in front of the counter. Over the street door and the workroom door are bells, which ring when the doors are opened.)*

*(As the curtain rises, **MRS. MOLLOY** is in the window, standing on a box, reaching up to put hats on the stand. **MINNIE FAY** is sewing by the counter. **MRS. MOLLOY** has a pair of felt overshoes, to be removed later.)*

MRS. MOLLOY. Minnie, you're a fool. Of course I shall marry Horace Vandergelder.

MINNIE. Oh, Mrs. Molloy! I didn't ask you. I wouldn't dream of asking you such a personal question.

MRS. MOLLOY. Well, it's what you meant, isn't it? And there's your answer. I shall certainly marry Horace Vandergelder if he should ask me. (*Crawls under window rail, into the room, singing loudly.*)

MINNIE. I know it's none of my business –

MRS. MOLLOY. Speak up, Minnie. I can't hear you.

MINNIE. ...but do you...do you...?

MRS. MOLLOY. Minnie, you're a fool. Say it: Do I love him? Of course, I don't love him. But I have two good reasons for marrying him just the same. Minnie, put something on that hat. It's not ugly enough. (*Throws hat over counter.*)

MINNIE. (*Catching and taking the hat to table.*) Not ugly enough!

MRS. MOLLOY. I couldn't sell it. Put a...put a sponge on it.

MINNIE. Why, Mrs. Molloy, you're in such a *mood* today.

MRS. MOLLOY. In the first place I shall marry Mr. Vandergelder to get away from the millinery business. I've hated it from the first day I had anything to do with it. Minnie, I hate hats. (*Sings loudly again.*)

MINNIE. Why, what's the matter with the millinery business?

MRS. MOLLOY. (*Crossing to the window with two hats.*) I can no longer stand being suspected of being a wicked woman, while I have nothing to show for it. I can't stand it. (*She crawls under rail into window.*)

MINNIE. Why, no one would dream of suspecting you.

MRS. MOLLOY. (*On her knees, she looks over the rail.*) Minnie, you're a fool. All millineresses are suspected of being wicked women. Why, half the time all those women come into the shop merely to look at me.

MINNIE. Oh!

MRS. MOLLOY. They enjoy the suspicion. But they aren't certain. If they were *certain* I was a wicked woman, they wouldn't put foot in this place again. Do I go to restaurants? No, it would be bad for business. Do I go to balls, or theatres, or operas? No, it would be bad

for business. The only men I ever meet are feather-merchants. (*Crawls out of the window, but gazes intently into the street.*) What are those two young men doing out there on that park bench? Take my word for it, Minnie, either I marry Horace Vandergelder, or I break out of this place like a fire-engine. I'll go to every theatre and ball and opera in New York City. (*Returns to counter, singing again.*)

MINNIE. But Mr. Vandergelder's not...

MRS. MOLLOY. Speak up, Minnie, I can't hear you.

MINNIE. ...I don't think he's attractive.

MRS. MOLLOY. But what I think he is – and it's very important – I think he'd make a good fighter.

MINNIE. Mrs. Molloy!

MRS. MOLLOY. Take my word for it, Minnie: the best of married life is the fights. The rest is merely so-so.

MINNIE. (*Fingers in ears.*) I won't listen.

MRS. MOLLOY. Peter Molloy – God rest him! – was a fine arguing man. I pity the woman whose husband slams the door and walks out of the house at the beginning of an argument. Peter Molloy would stand up and fight for hours on end. He'd even throw things, Minnie, and there's no pleasure to equal that. When I felt tired I'd start a good blood-warming fight and it'd take ten years off my age; now Horace Vandergelder would put up a good fight; I know it. I've a mind to marry him.

MINNIE. (*Dreamily.*) I think they're just awful, the things you're saying today.

(*At the window.*) Mrs. Molloy, those two men out in the street –

MRS. MOLLOY. What?

MINNIE. Those men. It looks as if they meant to come in here.

MRS. MOLLOY. Well now, it's time some men came into this place. I give you the younger one, Minnie.

MINNIE. Aren't you terrible!

(**MRS. MOLLOY** sits on the center table, while **MINNIE** takes off her felt overshoes.)

MRS. MOLLOY. Wait till I get my hands on that older one! Mark my words, Minnie, we'll get an adventure out of this yet. Adventure, adventure! Why does everybody have adventures except me, Minnie? Because I have no spirit, I have no gumption. Minnie, they're coming in here. Let's go into the workroom and make them wait for us for a minute.

MINNIE. Oh, but Mrs. Molloy...my work!...

MRS. MOLLOY. (*Running toward the workroom.*) Hurry up, Minnie. Be quick now.

(*They go out to workroom. BARNABY and CORNELIUS run in from street, leaving the front door open. They are dressed in the stiff discomfort of their Sunday clothes. CORNELIUS wears a bowler hat, BARNABY a straw hat too large for him.*)

BARNABY. No one's here.

CORNELIUS. Some women were here a minute ago. I saw them. (*They jump back to the street door and peer down the street.*) That's Wolf-trap all right! (*Coming back.*) Well, we've got to hide here until he passes by.

BARNABY. He's sitting down on that bench. It may be quite a while.

CORNELIUS. When these women come in, we'll have to make conversation until he's gone away. We'll pretend we're buying a hat. How much money have you got now?

BARNABY. Forty cents for the train – seventy cents for dinner – twenty cents to see the whale – and a dollar I lost – I have seventy cents.

CORNELIUS. And I have a dollar seventy-five. I wish I knew how much hats cost!

BARNABY. Is this an adventure, Cornelius?

CORNELIUS. No, but it may be.

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