

DOLLY/VANDERGELDER

12

Act One – Scene 2

HORACE. What? What?

DOLLY. Congratulations, Mr. Vandergelder! All New York is buzzing with the news that you've practically proposed to Irene Molloy. The streets are lined with eligible young ladies prostrate with grief. All my congratulations and sympathy—

HORACE. Sympathy?

DOLLY. Did I say that? A slip of the tongue, that's all. No I'm delighted with the happy news, after all she wasn't easy to unload — by that I mean you know what people said although I for one never believed the rumors, no I didn't ... *(Sits on steps at stage right)*

HORACE. Rumors? What rumors?

DOLLY. Nothing to get upset about, Mr. Vandergelder. I mean according to all known facts her first husband passed on quite naturally. It's just that he went so sudden. A few spoons of chowder she made special for him and pfft! But, it could happen to anyone. No there's no truth in it. Just one word of advice, Mr. Vandergelder. Eat out!

HORACE sits down on a stool by DOLLY.

HORACE. Now hold on, Mrs. Levi, you mean to say that Mrs. Molloy—

DOLLY. I mean to say nothing, Mr. Vandergelder. Just friendly advice. Keep away from the chowder. By the way, she's ordered her wedding gown, beautiful; you should see it — black! *(Rises, crosses to center)* Well, as I said before, Mr. Vandergelder, congratulations on your forthcoming nuptials and may you rest in ... I mean, may guardian angels watch over you both. Particularly at dinner.

HORACE. *(Crossing to DOLLY)* Look here, Mrs. Levi, you introduced me to Mrs. Molloy and rumors or not I intend calling on her this afternoon ... as arranged!

DOLLY. *(Crossing toward the door)* Very well, Mr. Vandergelder, then there's nothing more for me to do but go back to New York and tell the other girl, the heiress, not to wait ...

HORACE. *(Crossing to DOLLY)* What did you say?

DOLLY. Nothing, a word, heiress.

HORACE. Particulars, Mrs. Levi, I demand particulars — her name!

DOLLY. Her name? Er, um, blah ... Money? Ernestina Money.

HORACE. What a lovely lovely name.

DOLLY. Picture if you will, hair as shiny as a newly minted dime ... eyes as big round as silver dollars ... skin as soft and mossy as an old greenback—

DOLLY/VANDERGELDER

Act One – Scene 2

13 *Act*

HORACE. I can feel her now.

DOLLY. Age nineteen; weight, a hundred and two; waist, forty-seven—

HORACE. Waist forty-seven?

DOLLY. That's with the money belt. Now I could arrange for you to meet this Ernestina this very afternoon.

HORACE. I ain't got time, Mrs. Levi. I got to bring my niece Ermengarde to New York this afternoon until she forgets a certain Ambrose Kemper!

DOLLY. I could do that for you, Mr. Vandergelder.
I know just how to handle such things.

HORACE. (*Crossing to DOLLY*) Then I'm marching in
the Fourteenth Street Parade!

DOLLY. What an amazing coincidence! Guess who's been chosen
to ride on the main float — the Spirit of Fourteenth Street —
Miss Money! (*Aside*) Her mother was a Cash, you know.

HORACE. All right, Mrs. Levi, I'll meet Miss Money at the parade,
but I still intend paying another call on Ms. Molloy first!

DOLLY. Oh dear, what races you make me run! Very well, Mr. Vandergelder,
I'll meet you on that bench in front of Mrs. Molloy's hat shop at two thirty
as usual.

HORACE. One more thing, Mrs. Levi! Suppose I decide against
Mrs. Molloy and I don't like Miss Money neither?

DOLLY. Well, then I happen to have one more name on my list, Mr. Vandergelder, a
name I know as well as my own but let's not go into that now. It'll come up by
itself all in good time, don't you worry about it! (*DOLLY gets HORACE'S coat*) Oh,
but wait'll you see Ernestina, Horace! (*Music in*) A vision! A dream!

AMBROSE/DOLLY

DOLLY. Now the first thing to do is make you financially independent. I know! I'll find you a job. Can you dance?

AMBROSE. I'm an artist, Mrs. Levi. I paint!

DOLLY. Well, then, my card!

DOLLY hands AMBROSE a card. Music pauses.

AMBROSE. Mrs. Dolly Levi — Painters taught how to dance!

DOLLY. Now, there's a man, Rudolph Reisenweber, at the Harmonia Gardens Restaurant on Fourteenth Street, I'll give you a note for him and we'll see if he can't have you both entered in the polka contest tonight. The prize is a week's engagement and a gold cup. Oh, the cups we won, Ephraim and me!

AMBROSE. Hold on, Mrs. Levi! No fiancée of mine is going to set foot in a cafe. (ERMENGARDE *cries once*) And I don't mind saying I'm surprised that you have acquaintances in a place like that.

DOLLY. Not acquaintances, Mr. Kemper, friends. Dear friends from days gone by. My late husband Ephraim Levi believed in life and anyplace you could find it — cafes, ballrooms, yes even theatres! Why, even when times were bad, every Saturday night like clockwork down those stairs at the Harmonia Gardens we came, Ephraim and me.

AMBROSE. It's all very well to come down like clockwork, Mrs. Levi, but you're asking Ermengarde to work there!

ERMENGARDE cries.

DOLLY. It's the only way to show Horace Vandergelder we mean business! Now you go to Harmonia Gardens this afternoon and say Mrs. Levi sent you and incidentally tell Rudolph that Dolly's coming back and I want a table for two and a chicken for eight o'clock tonight!

BARNABY/CORNELIUS

CORNELIUS. Chief clerk! Promoted from chief clerk to 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. You can live on holidays, Cornelius!

CORNELIUS. Did you forget what we did last Christmas? All those canned tomatoes went bad and exploded and you and I cleaned up the mess all afternoon. Do you call that living?

BARNABY. No!

CORNELIUS. Barnaby, you and I are going to New York!

BARNABY. You mean close the store?

CORNELIUS. Uh huh.

BARNABY. Cornelius, we can't!

CORNELIUS. We'll have to. Some more rotten tomato cans are going to explode.

BARNABY. Holy cabooses! How do you know?

CORNELIUS. I'm going to light this candle under them, that's how I know. They'll make such a smell customers won't be able to come into the place for twenty-four hours. That'll get us an evening off! We're going to New York, Barnaby, and we're going to live! We're going to have a good meal, we're going to be in danger, we're going to spend our money, we're going to be arrested ...

CORNELIUS falls down the open trap.

BARNABY. Holy Cabooses!

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

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

CORNELIUS. I'm thirty three years old! I've got to begin sometime!

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

CORNELIUS. New York. Barnaby! Elevated trains! The lights of Broadway! The stuffed whale at Barnum's Museum!

BARNABY. A stuffed whale?

CORNELIUS. A stuffed whale! What do you say, Barnaby?

BARNABY. ...Yes, Cornelius! Yes!

MINNIE/MRS. MOLLOY

MINNIE. (*Who's evidently been talking throughout*) ... And as I was saying,
Mrs. Molloy, I could bite out my tongue

Music fades out.

for the things I've said and the things I'm going to say
but as long as I've gone this far I might as well go all the way!
Mrs. Molloy ... why ... why ...

MRS. MOLLOY. Say it, Minnie. Why have I decided to marry Horace Vandergelder?

MINNIE. Oh, Mrs. Molloy, I didn't ask you that! I would rather die on the rack than ask you such a personal question! But as long as you did bring it up ...

MRS. MOLLOY. I am marrying Horace Vandergelder for one reason and one reason alone, Minnie! To get away from the millinery business. I hate hats!

MINNIE. Mrs. Molloy!

MRS. MOLLOY. (*Taking a stool out of a cupboard*) And I can no longer stand being suspected of being a wicked woman with nothing to show for it.

MINNIE. (*Getting the hat box*) Oh, Mrs. Molloy!

MRS. MOLLOY. Don't protest, Minnie! All millineresses are suspected of being wicked women. That's why I can't go into restaurants or balls or theaters — that's all the proof they'd need! Take my word for it, Minnie — either I marry Horace Vandergelder or I break out of this place like a fire engine! (*Pointing to the hat box*) Oh no, not Miss Mortimer again?

MINNIE. Miss Mortimer. I'll take care of it. (*Starting right with the hat box*)

MRS. MOLLOY. No, Minnie, leave it be! You can make another hat for Miss Mortimer if you like. I'm wearing this one myself. (*Takes the hat box*)

MINNIE. Mrs. Molloy, you can't! You're a widow and that hat... well, it's ... it's provocative, that's what!

MRS. MOLLOY. It is, Minnie?

MRS. MOLLOY *removes the hat from its box. Music starts.*

No. 5

Ribbons Down My Back

See p. 78

(Mrs. Molloy)

MRS. MOLLOY. (*Continued, over music*) Well, who knows who may walk into the shop today ... and provocative may be just what I want to be!

Minnie. (*Shocked, exiting right*) Mrs. Molloy!

ERNESTINA

ERNESTINA. Say, why the closed curtains? You ashamed or something?

HORACE. It's not that, I just felt a slight chill.

ERNESTINA. Why didn't you say so? Here, I'll loan you this. (*Puts boa around HORACE'S neck*) Now, let's order something to hold us till the rice comes. Waiter, would you bring a roast suckling pig with chestnut and oyster stuffing, cheese fondue and some ladyfingers. (*Then to HORACE*) Now, what'll you have?

Curtains close and WAITERS zip back and forth with trays, etc.
ERNESTINA sticks her head out.

Hey, you with the big ears ... what are you doing after the show?