

THE MATCHMAKER

Thornton Wilder

Dolly Levi, Horace (1 woman, 1 man)

Yonkers, 1880's. The living room of Horace Vandergelders home above his store. Mr. Vandergelder is visited by Mrs. Dolly Levi, a widowed matchmaker.

DOLLY

Mr. Vandergelder. I suppose you've changed your mind again. I suppose you've given up all idea of getting married.

VANDERGELDER

Not at all, Mrs. Levi. I have news for you.

DOLLY

News? (Bringing desk chair to centre and standing behind it) News?

VANDERGELDER

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

DOLLY

You have?

VANDERGELDER

Yes, I have.

DOLLY

Oh, you have! Well, I guess that's just about the best news I ever heard. Oh dear me! So there's nothing more for me to do but wish you every happiness under the sun and say goodbye.

VANDERGELDER

(stopping her)

Well- Mrs. Levi- Surely I thought-

DOLLY

(going up Right again)

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?

DOLLY

Well- I *had* found *another* girl for you.

VANDERGELDER

Another?

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DOLLY

The most wonderful girl, the ideal wife.

VANDERGELDER

Another, eh? What's her name? (*Turns*)

DOLLY

Her name?

VANDERGELDER

Yes!

DOLLY

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!

DOLLY

Nonsense! You can't break poor Irene's heart now and change to another girl – (*Crosses up Left Centre*) 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! (*Crosses Right*)

VANDERGELDER

That ain't an engagement! (*Crosses up Left*)

DOLLY

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. (*Sits*) 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?

DOLLY

Ernestina Simple.

VANDERGELDER

(*Going round down to Left*) Ernestina Simple.

DOLLY

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

VANDERGELDER

Can she cook? (*Crosses Centre*)

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DOLLY

Cook, Mr. Vandergelder? I've had two meals from her hands, and –as I live- I don't know what I've that God should reward me with such meals. (*Vandergelder goes to Right desk. She rises and comes to him*) I'm the best cook in the world myself, and I *know* what's good.

VANDERGELDER

Hm. How old is she, Mrs. Levi? (*Sits*)

DOLLY

Nineteen, well – say twenty. (*To behind up stage table*)

VANDERGELDER

(*Rises, following*) Twenty, Mrs. Levi? Girls of twenty are apt to favour young fellows of their own age. (*Perches on Left end of table.*)

DOLLY

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.

VANDERGELDER

(*Crosses to left*) That's- not usual, Mrs. Levi.

DOLLY

(*To him*) 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. (*Crosses down Right centre*) If you want to make her happy, you give her a picture of Methuselah surrounded by his grandchildren. (*Sits*) That's my advice to you.

VANDERGELDER

What's her family?

DOLLY

Her father? - God be good to him! He was the best –what am I trying to say? Undertaker – 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. (*Rises. She comes over, takes his right arm and leads him down left.*) 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 lamp-posts. And she? Modest eyes on the ground – I'm not going to tell you anymore – (*Goes above bench to Centre, crosses back to down right. Vandergelder follows her.*) Couldn't you come over to New York today?

VANDERGELDER

I was thinking of coming to New York his afternoon –

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DOLLY

You were? (*Turns*) 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?

DOLLY

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 Staten Island, that's a fact. But just now I'm at my wit's end for a little help, just enough money to finish it off. My wit's end! (*She looks in her handbag.*)

(*In order not to hear this, Vandergelder has a series of coughs, sneezes and minor convulsions. He moves over to desk. Replaces chair at desk.*)

DOLLY

But perhaps I could arrange a little dinner; I'll see. (*Crosses to him*) 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!!

DOLLY

Two whole months I've been –

VANDERGELDER

Fifty dollars, Mrs. Levi – is no joke. (*producing purse, he turns half away from her*) 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, putting the notes away, goes below bench to right center.*)

DOLLY

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. (*Turns away*)

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DOLLY

A chicken wouldn't hurt.

VANDERGELDER

Chicken! – Well, just this once.