

Scene 1.

Characters:

*Mrs. Dolly Levi - An indefatigable, meddling matchmaker of strikingly dramatic appearance; a widow in her middle years.*

*Mr. Horace Vandergelder - Proprietor of a Hay & Feed Store in Yonkers, NY, and a client of Mrs. Levi's. A widower of some means.*

**Mr. Vandergelder:** *(To the audience.)* Ninety nine percent of the people in this world are fools ... and the rest of us are in great danger of contamination! Why, even I was once young, which was foolish; and got married, which was foolish; and was poor, which was more foolish than anything else. Then my wife died which was foolish of her; I grew older which was sensible of me; and became rich, friendless and mean, which in Yonkers is about as far as you can go!  
*Mrs. Levi enters.*

**Mrs. Levi:** Congratulations, congratulations, a thousand congratulations!

**Mr. Vandergelder:** What? What?

**Mrs. Levi:** Congratulations, Mr. Vandergelder! All New York is buzzing with the news that you've practically proposed to Irene Malloy. The streets are lined with eligible young ladies prostrate with grief. All my congratulations and sympathy -

**Mr. Vandergelder:** Sympathy?

**Mrs. Levi:** 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 ...

**Mr. Vandergelder:** Rumors? What Rumors?

**Mrs. Levi:** 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!

**Mr. Vandergelder:** Now hold on, Mrs. Levi, you mean to say that Mrs. Malloy -

**Mrs. Levi:** I mean to say nothing, Mr. Vandergelder. Just friendly advice. Keep away from the chowder. By the way, she's ordered the wedding gown, beautiful; you should see it - black! 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.

Scene 2.

Characters:

*Irene Molloy - A millineress with a Hat Shop in NYC. Mrs. Levi has introduced her to Mr. Vandergelder.*

*Minne - A woman who works in Irene Molloy's shop.*

**Minnie:** Oh, Mrs. Molloy, I could bite out my tongue for the things I'm going to say but as long as I'm saying them ... 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:** And I can no longer stand being suspected of being a wicked woman with nothing to show for it.

**Minnie:** 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!

**Minnie:** Mrs. Molloy, wild horses can't make me ask this next question I'm about to ask, but I'm going to ask it anyhow! Do you love Horace Vandergelder?

**Mrs. Molloy:** No, Minnie. I don't. Peter Molloy, God rest him, was my share of love and I'm not sayin' I was short changed. Once is enough for a woman as long as it's true love, and it was that.

**Minnie:** Oh, Mrs. Molloy.