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DANCING DOLLS

KENNETH SAWYER
GOODMAN



STAGE GUILD PLAYS
DANCING DOLLS



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DANCING DOLLS
A FANTASTIC COMEDY
IN ONE ACT

BY

KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN
||

WITH A PROLOGUE BY

THOMAS WOOD STEVENS



CHICAGO
THE STAGE GUILD
MCMXV

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NOTICE: Application for permission to perform this play in the United States should be made to The Stage Guild, Railway Exchange Building, Chicago; and application for permission to perform it elsewhere should be made to Mr. B. Iden Payne, The Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, England. No performance of it may take place without consent of the owners of the acting rights.

MAY 20 1915

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DANCING DOLLS was first produced by the Department of Dramatic Arts of the Carnegie Institute of Technology, at Pittsburgh, June 15, 1914, under the direction of Mr. Thomas Wood Stevens, with the following caste:

In the Prologue

FLEURETTE.....	Doris Williams
COLINETTE.....	Alice S. Guthrie
BLANCHE.....	Inez M. Krebs
A DANCER.....	Elizabeth Duffy

In the Play

GILLES.....	Charles F. Steen
BUFFO.....	Leo Beiter
MEZZETIN.....	Charles Meredith
MARGOT.....	Betty Brown
FINETTA.....	Marcella Frederick
CLEMENTINA.....	Florence Little
THE NOTARY.....	Charles H. Duffy

PROLOGUE

[FLEURETTE, COLINETTE, *and* BLANCHE.]

FLEURETTE

Long is the road from Paris to Provence,
Dear friends, and longer still across the foam
To this far village. But we banished folk,
We players in the brave Italian style,
We may not shirk long roads nor weary feet,
Nor the bleak wintry passage of the sea.
And mark you now: in yonder tented space
Which, I beseech you, you must here behold,
On yonder stage that lifts above the green
(You see the stage? No? Take my word for it);
Now, even now, great Mezzetin stands forth,
And Gilles, whom you outlandish folk do know
By other names, as Pierrot the clown,
Gilles, whom all Paris loved and laughed with,
Gilles
Dances again his quaint immortal round
And dreams again his broken dream of love.
It's a sad play. We often weep, ourselves
When Gilles is left so desolate at the end.
And so I pray you, do you all sit here,
And let the gaping crowd inside weep on,
(You hear the crowd) and you shall see brave
sights,
Dancing and mumming, and the merry life
That beats behind the tinsel and the tears;

Gilles you shall see, and roaring Mezzetin,
Margot, Finetta, all our company—

COLINETTE

If you go on, these folk will run away.

FLEURETTE

Ah, no; they'll wait—until you dance.

BLANCHE

I quite agree—you prologue far too long.

FLEURETTE

What would you have?

BLANCHE

They came to see us dance.

FLEURETTE

Deluded souls! They do not look so simple.

COLINETTE

They look disheartened—listening all this time.

BLANCHE

Fie, they've not listened. They have merely
waited.

FLEURETTE

Waited indeed—to cheer when I have done.

COLINETTE

I'll join them cheering—if you ever cease.

BLANCHE

And so will I, if I am still awake.

FLEURETTE

It's a sad time, when kittenish little fluffs,
All pretty tricks and dances, grow to cats!

COLINETTE

But cats have claws!

BLANCHE

And you have said enough!

[FLEURETTE *slips out from between them, leaving them clawing at each other.*]

FLEURETTE

Sweet friends, permit me but a hasty word.
You'll see no play of Roman heroes here,
No wars nor kings that thunder in defeat,
Nor queens in tears for destinies gone wrong.
But watch you well the crossing of the plot,
How Gilles grows weary of Finetta's love,
And Mezzetin and Margot drift apart,
And how—but hold. I must not tell you all.
And first, the dancers, Colinette and Blanche,
These twain, toward whom, in our unbanished
days,
All Paris kissed the hand in mad applause.
Judge you, sweet friends, if long and weary
roads

Have, even a trifle—no? Let the dance begin.

[*When FLEURETTE, COLINETTE, and
BLANCHE have finished their
dance they scamper away, and
the action begins.*]

NOTE. *This is Prologue for use where the play
is given out of doors, without a curtain.*

DANCING DOLLS

The Scene is the interior of a tent, used as a dressing-room by a company of strollers. At the back is a curtain, which cuts off the dressing-room from the stage, the edge of which is seen, raised upon saw-horses to a height of two and a half feet. There are wooden steps leading from the stage to the ground. At the right is a door, merely a flap in the canvas, which is supposed to be an entrance from outside; in other words, the stage door. At the opposite side is another flap leading to a smaller tent, used by the ladies of the company. There are several costumes lying on the backs of chairs, and a make-up table, equipped with a mirror and a large candle reflector, stands at left near the front.

As the curtain rises, BUFFO sits at a small table, a little to the right of the centre, with his back to the stage door. GILLES is seated on the back of a chair across the table from BUFFO and is telling him a funny story. BUFFO has a bouquet of flowers clasped in one hand and is laughing uproariously. Beside his chair is a covered basket. The music is playing faintly, as if a performance were going on behind the back-cloth.

The Time is the late afternoon of a spring day early in the eighteenth century.

The Place is a country town, somewhere in the south of France.

BUFFO. Ho, ho! Ha, ha! That's the most comical thing I ever heard!

GILLES. Wait till I tell you the rest of it. There was the young count, with a bouquet of roses in one hand, and a leg of lamb in the other—

BUFFO. [*slapping the table*] Ho, ho! Ha, ha! Go on, go on!

GILLES. [*illustrating his story by waving his arms*] Bottles flying—just imagine it! Chairs breaking—all hell broken loose in a jiffy, like a what-do-you-call-it in a crockery shop.

BUFFO. Splendid! Splendid! Ho, ho! Ha, ha! [*He sways back and forth.*]

GILLES. [*climbing down from his perch and striking a pose*] I jumped between Mezzetin and the count. "Sir," I cried, "How dare you force your way into the ladies' dressing-room?"

BUFFO. [*awestruck*] You said that to a real count?

GILLES. We actors must stand on our dignity.

BUFFO. But didn't you get into trouble?

GILLES. Poof! We had supper together afterward.

BUFFO. You come in contact with *very* distinguished people.

GILLES. Artists come in contact with *everybody*.

BUFFO. [*leaning forward eagerly, his elbows on the table*] You play before the *nobility*?

GILLES. In their own houses.

BUFFO. And the *clergy*?
[*He draws up his chair to the table and sits down.*]

GILLES. My dear sir, we have a morality play, all about the damnation of somebody-or-other. Mezzetin groans like a bull in real hell-fire. It always gets them.

BUFFO. I acted once, myself.

GILLES. [*feigning amazement and admiration*] Indeed?

BUFFO. [*nodding his head*] I was the clown in a tragedy.

GILLES. But I thought your vocation was raising poultry?

BUFFO. [*proudly*] I own the largest poultry farm in the county.

GILLES. You find poultry and the neighborhood congenial to a man of your refined tastes?

BUFFO. [*sadly conscious of his superiority to his neighbors*] Alas, no! I find them dull as mud. No one of culture to spend a quiet evening with. No one of finer feelings to criticise my poems.

GILLES. *What*, you're a poet, too?

BUFFO. I've written two poems and a play.

GILLES. You amaze me! Was the play given?

BUFFO. [*shaking his head*] No. It was rejected solely because it requires two elephants and a camel.

GILLES. Was it written in verse?

BUFFO. No. It was written in pantomime.

GILLES. You certainly amaze me! Why, a man of your talents could make a fortune in the profession.

BUFFO. [*eagerly*] Do you think so?

GILLES. [*rising and again illustrating by gestures*] Not a doubt of it! Take this company for instance. The investment isn't large. The profits are most satisfactory, and the personnel is charming. Mezzetin, the talented tragedian and sword-swallower, Margot, the delirious dancer, and—I kiss my hand to her—Finetta.

BUFFO. [*rising, with the bouquet in his hand*] Of course! That reminds me, I've brought this bouquet of roses to Mistress Finetta—I kiss my hand to her.

GILLES. Bravo! I see you have the grand manner.

BUFFO. There's a poem pinned to them.

GILLES. Never mind the poem.
[*He snatches the flowers from BUFFO and buries his nose in them.*]

BUFFO. [*reaching for the flowers*] But—but—

GILLES. Oh, immortal roses! Roses that die in a day, and live forever! There's joy in the breath of you; hint of all the dancing, and laughter, and scarlet lips of the world!

BUFFO. But, I say!
[*The music stops suddenly, and GILLES sinks into the chair.*]

GILLES. Oh, terrible roses! There's sadness in you, too. Tears in your hearts; scarlet tears for the loves we couldn't keep. There's the savor of the churchyard about you; hint of finished music, and tired feet, and aching eyes, and empty hands. Oh, roses, roses!
[*He tosses away the flowers, and clasps his hands.*]

BUFFO. Yes, yes! I think I said something about roses in my poem.

GILLES. [*coming to himself*] The devil! Ah, I'd forgotten you and your confounded poem.

BUFFO. [*producing his basket*] But, see here what else I've brought, just to make sure I'd please her. You can't make a meal off roses.

GILLES. Pray, sir, explain.

BUFFO. It's a cold roast capon; that's what it is! And a head of lettuce, and a bottle of red wine. Ha, ha! Ho, ho! Please the stomach, please the heart—that's my motto.

[*The music strikes up again. There is a chatter of girls' voices, and clapping of hands. GILLES jumps up and seizes BUFFO'S basket.*]

GILLES. Quick now! Give it to me! The act's over. Mezzetin's swallowed his sword. I can't let him catch you here.

[*He snatches the basket and sets it on the floor behind the table.*]

BUFFO. Wait a minute! Wait a minute!

GILLES. [*returning to BUFFO*] Out with you! Stir your stumps!

BUFFO. But, I say! Wait a minute! I want to speak to Mistress Finetta.

GILLES. [*dragging at BUFFO'S coat*] Oh, for a team of horses! Out with you or I'll do something desperate.

[*He pulls BUFFO to the door at the*

right. MEZZETIN enters from the stage, followed by the two girls. The music is still playing. MEZZETIN strikes an attitude.]

MEZZETIN. [*flourishing his wooden sword*]
" 'Twas thus I scaled the flaming breach of Troy.
While all the plain, a reeking sea of blood,
Gurgled below me."

Ha, who's this? [*He points to BUFFO.*]

BUFFO. I—I—beg your pardon. I'm going.
[*Exit BUFFO. GILLES sinks into a chair, laughing.*]

MARGOT. [*taking a turn on her toes*] Who was the funny little man?

GILLES. Just a bigger fool than ourselves.

MEZZETIN. [*throwing off his cloak*] In that case, I opine that the person has lent Gilles money. [*He sits down at the make-up table, and preens himself before the mirror.*]

FINETTA. [*fretfully*] Don't we get any supper?

GILLES. [*jumping up*] That we do! I'll beat the drum while somebody cooks a little bean soup.

FINETTA. [*turning on GILLES*] I don't want any bean soup.

MARGOT. I am afraid there isn't anything else.

FINETTA. [*stamping her foot*] Then cook it yourself. I'm going to lie down.
[*She starts toward the door at the left.*]

MARGOT. Of course, I'll cook it if you won't.

GILLES. [*picking up a clown's suit*] There's a good girl—always ready to do her share of the work. [*To FINETTA, who has stopped and is eyeing MARGOT jealously*] By the way, my dear, here's a nice pair of white what-you-may-call-'ems, minus part of the seat.

FINETTA. [*stamping her foot again*] You're always trying to have me mend something.

GILLES. But look at them, in the name of common decency!

FINETTA. Give them to Margot—she's a good girl—she's obliging—

GILLES. [*backing away cautiously and picking up BUFFO's flowers*] Don't be huffy! See what I've bought for you—a nice bouquet of lovely thingumbobs!

[*He hands her the flowers.*]

FINETTA. I don't want the nasty flowers.
[*She throws them on the floor and flounces through door at left.*]

GILLES. [*ruefully*] Now, there's a devil of a temper for you!

MEZZETIN. [*leaning back with a gesture of evident self satisfaction*]

“'Twas thus Adonis in the morning glow
Of Attic April set her heart aflame.”

GILLES. [*turning upon MEZZETIN*] Your smirk is positively ridiculous.

MARGOT. What on earth has got into you?

MEZZETIN. [*rising with alacrity and striking an attitude*] The anticipation of a good time. The pleasurable sense of a perfectly unsought conquest! My friends, I am dining at the inn with a charming young lady. Poor little thing, how she adores me.

GILLES. [*sarcastically*] At her expense?

MEZZETIN. Certainly!

MARGOT. [*with a smiling attempt to appear unconcerned*] Don't break her heart.

[*She takes the clown suit from GILLES and sits down to sew.*]

MEZZETIN. That's her affair.

THE NOTARY. [*outside*] Mr. Mezzetin! Oh, Mr. Mezzetin!

MEZZETIN. [*going toward the door at the right*] Ah, ha! It's my friend, the notary. Come in, come in, Mr. Notary. Damn it, where's my cloak? [*He turns and looks for his cloak.*]

THE NOTARY. [*entering timidly*] I beg your pardon!

MEZZETIN. I'll be with you in a moment. [*He finds his cloak and throws it about his shoulders.*] A thousand pardons! My friends, Mr.

Gilles and Mistress Margot. Two of the most talented artists in the profession.

GILLES. [*making an exaggerated bow*] Charmed!

MARGOT. [*making an exaggerated curtsy*] Delighted!

THE NOTARY. [*with a tremendous effort to outdo both of them*] Overwhelmed!

MEZZETIN. [*impressively*] You've heard me speak of my friend, the notary. He's been good enough to stop for me. He dines with us tonight, for the sake of propriety, at the Blue Pig.

THE NOTARY. A great honor—a great honor, I assure you! Are you ready, Mr. Mezzetin?

MEZZETIN. [*with a grand flourish*] After you, my dear sir!

THE NOTARY. Overwhelmed!

MARGOT. Delighted.

GILLES. Charmed!

[*All of them repeat their bows. The NOTARY goes out. MEZZETIN follows him but turns at the door to declaim.*]

MEZZETIN.

“Thus, Paris, musing on the Spartans' Queen,
With stately tread, approached the banquet
hall.”

[*He goes out.*]

GILLES. [*snappishly*] Ha, ha! [*He turns to MARGOT.*] There's the devil of a chap for you! Well, it's one less mouth to feed here. [*He puts BUFFO'S basket on the table and begins taking out the contents.*] Never mind! There'll be no bean soup for us tonight, if we *don't* dine at the Blue Pig.

MARGOT. [*laying down the clown's suit and rising*] There, I've finished your patch. Now I'll be getting our supper.

GILLES. No need, my dear. Behold the table spread; the feast prepared! A cold roast capon, a head of lettuce, and a bottle of red wine.

MARGOT. [*clapping her hands*] Wizard! Where did they come from?

GILLES. I took them out of the old drum, the way I take rabbits out of my hat at the fair.

MARGOT. Seriously.

GILLES. Seriously. Well, I bought them at the Blue Pig.

MARGOT. Honestly?

GILLES. Honestly. Well, to be quite honest, I stole them, basket and all.

MARGOT. [*laughing*] How delicious!
[*She pulls up her chair.*]

GILLES. Yes, aren't they? The butter is under that leaf of green stuff.
[*He sits down at the table.*]

MARGOT. How wonderful it would be to have such things every day! I ought to have been a farmer's wife.

GILLES. You ought to have been a duchess.

MARGOT. [*a little sadly*] No, no! Just a plain farmer's wife, to sew and cook and scrub pans. To stay in one place all the time. Oh, it would be heavenly to work in a nice wet garden.

GILLES. With those little hands?

MARGOT. [*pushing back her chair and turning away*] Don't! Please don't tease me!

GILLES. There! There! Why, what's the matter with your eyes?

MARGOT. I'm tired—tired—I don't want to be teased.

GILLES. Child! Child! I'm not teasing you. I'll tell you a secret. *I'd* like to work in a garden, too. *I've* looked over the walls lots of times when we've been trundling along the roads. *I've* peeped through the little green gates in the hedges and wanted to be inside, digging and planting and pulling things up.

MARGOT. [*drying her eyes*] In those clothes? It's too ridiculous!

GILLES. But I didn't always wear this rig, you know. I wasn't meant for this business we're in. I didn't always shout, and dance, and beat a drum, and juggle eggs. How I got into

it, I don't know. Why I stay in it, I don't know. I'm always wishing and wishing—

MARGOT. [*eagerly*] What are you always wishing and wishing?

GILLES. [*rather glumly*] I don't know—something or other. That I could settle down some place where I'd never hear the sound of a drum.

MARGOT. What would Finetta say to that?

GILLES. Confound it! Of course, she'd say I was a fool! That girl's one of those what-do-you-call-'ems, those spinning things. You can't stop her without killing her.

MARGOT. I never dreamt you felt this way. It's fun to have someone to talk to.

GILLES. Oh, Lord—I suppose you're like the rest. A woman talks and talks and never knows what she wants. Now, take Finetta for example—

MARGOT. [*tapping her foot*] Oh, yes, Finetta—you can't get Finetta out of your head.

GILLES. I can't, eh? Well, maybe I can't. Never mind me. Cheer up and eat something.

MARGOT. [*drawing up to the table again*] Isn't it fun! Let me pour the wine.

GILLES. Splendid! Let's be domestic. Let's talk about cows, and chickens, and smelly barnyards.

MARGOT. And nice, cool, wet gardens.

GILLES. And a what-do-you-call-it, covered with vines, to sit under.

MARGOT. [*thoughtfully*] Do you suppose Mezzetin ever thinks of such things?

GILLES. There you go! Didn't I know it? We're all in the same boat. It's the old story! Everything jumbled up the wrong way. Everybody mismated. You and Mezzetin, Finetta and me. They're the gay ones; always on the go, happy-go-lucky; devil-may-care; not a trouble in the world. This sort of life's the very breath of their bodies. Look at Finetta!

MARGOT. Look at Mezzetin!

GILLES. All right, look at him! What do you see?

MARGOT. A human jumping-jack. He's all springs. He couldn't be happy unless he was dancing.

GILLES. [*pleased, and becoming sure of himself*] That's just it! There you are! Now look at us. We're quiet. We're domestic. We'd never dance at all if we didn't have to. If—

MARGOT. Well, but what's the answer?

GILLES. I don't know. That we fuss, and fume, and stick to it, I suppose. Wait! Yes, I do know, too! Look here—I've a great what-you-may-call-it. Just popped into my head!

You and I are beautifully suited to each other—make one another happy for life—I've just found it out in the last five seconds. It solves the whole thing. Why not quit together, and then start together?

MARGOT. [*laughing*] It might mean starting together, and then quitting separately.

GILLES. No, but seriously! I tell you I've made up my mind! I've thought it all out in detail. It's my mission in life to make you happy.

MARGOT. You've made your decision pretty suddenly.

GILLES. [*jumping up*] All great decisions are made just that way. Why, confound it, look at what's-his-name, the great African King. He decided to invade what-was-the-place? Well, never mind. He decided to invade it anyway, and made all his plans while he was eating a piece of tripe at breakfast. And see what happened! Why he died, emperor of—emperor of something-or-other, just because he had the courage of his convictions.

MARGOT. Well, what *are* your plans for my happiness?

GILLES. [*after a moment's reflection*] I'll sell my interest in the show to Mezzetin.

MARGOT. But, Mezzetin hasn't any money!

GILLES. [*wildly enthusiastic*] Never mind! I'll sell it to somebody! We'll get married, and

buy a castle, or a cottage, or a what's-its-name, and settle down on it, and raise thingumbobs or something for market.

MARGOT. But, Gilles, you've *got* to have more definite plans than *that*.

GILLES. Wait a minute! Don't hurry me! I've got something rattling around in my head. It'll all come out in a jiffy. I was talking to somebody, just a few minutes ago, about something.

BUFFO. [*outside*] Oh, Mr. Gilles! Oh, Mr. Gilles! May I come in?

GILLES. There! Listen! Where have I heard that voice before? Where *have* I heard that voice?

BUFFO. May I come in?

MARGOT. It's the little fat man.

GILLES. [*going toward the door at the right*] Of course, it is! Come in! Come in! Now I have it. I told you I had it all thought out!

[BUFFO *enters*. GILLES *seizes his hand and drags him to the centre of the stage.*]

BUFFO. I—I beg your pardon for intruding again—

GILLES. My dear sir, you're the very man I've been waiting for.

BUFFO. But I only came to see if you had given my bouquet to Mistress Finetta?

GILLES. She was entranced.

BUFFO. [*with increasing eagerness*] And the poem?

GILLES. She was enraptured.

BUFFO. And the basket?

GILLES. [*pointing to the table*] You can see for yourself. She ate nearly all of it at one sitting.

BUFFO. [*very eagerly*] Might I speak to her now?

GILLES. Oh, my dear sir! She's inside there sleeping it off. You couldn't wake her if you banged a drum at her ear.

BUFFO. [*disappointed, but nodding his head*] I quite understand. I do the same thing myself after a heavy meal.
[*He starts toward the door at the right.*]

GILLES. [*stopping him*] Don't go. I want to talk with you.
[*He takes BUFFO'S arm.*]

BUFFO. But I'm afraid I'm intruding.
[*He looks at MARGOT and winks.*]

GILLES. By no means! This is my fiancee, Mistress Margot.

MARGOT. [*rising and making a curtsy*] Charmed to make your acquaintance.

BUFFO. [*bowing awkwardly*] Delighted, I'm sure. [*MARGOT sits down again.*]

GILLES. Good, now you know each other. Well, sir, as you were saying—

BUFFO. I wasn't saying anything.

GILLES. [*his hand to his head*] Of course not! I was saying something. Well, as I was saying—what was I saying?

MARGOT. That you had an idea.

GILLES. Yes, yes, yes! Now I have it! [*To BUFFO*] You were telling me that you'd made up your mind to go on the stage.

BUFFO. But, wait a minute. Wait a minute!

GILLES. In fact, you offered me a large sum for my share in this company!

BUFFO. [*puzzled*] I don't think we got as far as that. I don't remember that we got as far as that.

GILLES. Didn't we? That's strange! I seem to remember it quite distinctly. Never mind. I've decided to exchange my half-interest in this organization, all properties, costumes, musical instruments, scenery, and so forth, for your farm. No questions asked.

BUFFO. [*sitting down*] But I haven't had time to think.

GILLES. You'll never get such a chance again.

BUFFO. But, the other members of the company, do they agree?

GILLES. Absolutely! They retain their positions, of course.

BUFFO. [*eagerly*] And Mistress Finetta?

GILLES. She was delighted with the scheme.

BUFFO. [*scratching his head*] It's tempting—very tempting—but I really know very little about acting.

GILLES. There's very little to know. All you need is a good presence, and a fine voice, and control of your hands and feet. I can teach you everything in one lesson.

BUFFO. But—but—

GILLES. There's only two kinds of acting; tragic and comic.

BUFFO. I *did* act in a tragedy once.

GILLES. Good! That settles tragedy. There's only comedy left. It's very simple.

BUFFO. But *I* don't know anything about comedy. *I* couldn't be funny.

GILLES. Oh, yes, you could. You only need a few tricks to make people laugh.

BUFFO. What else?

GILLES. Just a few jokes to keep them laughing.

BUFFO. What kind of jokes? I'm afraid I don't know any jokes.

GILLES. Oh, any old wheeze—one would do at a pinch. Let me think. There's a fine one, about a what's-its-name that got loose in a what-do-you-call-it. I'll tell you in a minute.

BUFFO. [*dubiously*] That *does* sound funny.

GILLES. You wink at the audience and say—confound it, what do you say? Never mind, I'll tell you later. Sir, I congratulate you! I congratulate you with all my heart!

[*He seizes BUFFO's hand and shakes it violently.*]

BUFFO. [*wincing, and pulling away his hand*] But, my dear Mr. Gilles, let me explain.

GILLES. What! You're not satisfied?

BUFFO. [*working his right hand as if it had been injured*] I'm trying to tell you. I don't want any misunderstanding. I only own *half* the poultry farm. The other half belongs to a young lady, a cousin of mine. It's because of her that I'd like to sell out. She wants to marry me.

GILLES. Which half do you own?

BUFFO. Do you mean the largest half, or the smallest half?

GILLES. No, no! I mean do you own the flat part—the what's-its-name—or the thingumbobs—what sticks up from it?

BUFFO. [*completely puzzled*] Do you mean which half, dividing it north and south, or which half dividing it east and west?

MARGOT. [*clasping her hands*] Do you own the nice wet garden?

GILLES. Do you own the house?

BUFFO. Wait a minute! Let me get this straight.

GILLES. [*impatiently*] There's only two sides to a house; the inside and the outside. Which side do you own?

BUFFO. [*almost in tears*] I don't know, we inherited it. It wasn't mentioned in the will.

GILLES. Never mind! We'll settle that with your cousin when we move in.

BUFFO. It does sound simple.

GILLES. Here's my hand on the agreement. I congratulate you, sir! Nothing else to say.

[*He makes a grab for BUFFO's hand. BUFFO draws it away. GILLES unabashed slaps him heartily on the back.*]

BUFFO. [*doubtfully*] Thank you! Thank you very much!

MARGOT. But aren't there some formalities?

GILLES. Of course! How stupid of me! There's a thingumajig to sign before—before a—

BUFFO. A transfer to sign before a notary.

GILLES. Yes, yes, yes! A transfer to sign before a notary. Wait a minute! Didn't I see one of 'em here awhile ago?

MARGOT. Mezzetin's friend.

GILLES. I knew I'd think of it. We'll go and find him.

[He starts toward the door, picking up BUFFO'S hat.]

BUFFO. *[stupidly]* But—but—stop a minute!

GILLES. *[clapping the hat on BUFFO'S head]* Here's your hat. Come on, Margot.

[He pulls BUFFO out of his chair.

MARGOT rises to follow them.

FINETTA enters at the left. BUFFO sees her and holds back.]

BUFFO. There's Mistress Finetta. I want to speak to her!

GILLES. *[pulling at BUFFO'S arm]* She's only come back to eat more food. You'll see plenty of her later.

[He pushes BUFFO out and follows him.]

FINETTA. *[to MARGOT]* Where are you going?

MARGOT. [*carelessly*] Oh, out to take a little stroll.

FINETTA. [*fretfully*] Didn't you cook any supper for me?

MARGOT. You'll find something left on the table. [*She goes out.*]

FINETTA. [*looking at the remains of the feast*] Pigs! Greedy pigs!

[*She sets the things to rights, and sits down as if wondering which of the remnants she will try to eat. MEZZETIN sticks his head in at the opening of the back curtain.*]

MEZZETIN. [*in a whisper*] Hist! Finetta! Anybody here?

FINETTA. [*sullenly*] Not a soul!

MEZZETIN. [*entering with an angry flourish*] It's lucky for Gilles that he's out of my sight! I'd do him a terrible injury. I've never been so insulted in my life.

[*He strides up and down with gestures of rage.*]

FINETTA. [*not at all impressed*] Stop beating your chest and tell me what's the matter.

MEZZETIN. That notary is a perfect ass, if there ever was one.

FINETTA. What notary?

MEZZETIN. [*flourishing a piece of paper*] Why, the note who gave me this notary—I mean, the notary who gave me this note! Confound his stupidity! He gave it to the wrong man. She didn't even offer me a glass of beer.

FINETTA. [*coolly*] I haven't the least idea of what you're talking about.

MEZZETIN. [*throwing off his cloak*] I'm talking about a stage-struck fool of a country girl; the village heiress, to judge by the looks of her. She's ugly enough to own half the district.

FINETTA. What did she want?

MEZZETIN. What did she want? Why the dolt's fallen in love with that drum-beating numskull, that wooden-faced clown, that egg-juggling Gilles.

FINETTA. Well, what of it?

MEZZETIN. I tell you, I got the cold shoulder from a woman for the first time in my life.

FINETTA. Oh, is that all!

MEZZETIN. [*turning on her*] It is not. She had the effrontery to ask me to run back and fetch him. Then she had the consummate audacity to make me a purely business proposition. She offered to exchange her share of a country estate for my share of this theatrical enterprise, solely to be near that grinning shrimp, that clumsy, infernal buffoon that hasn't a spark of true tragic art in his entire carcass.

FINETTA. [*sarcastically*] I suppose you fell on her neck?

MEZZETIN. I merely drew myself up and left the room with becoming hauteur.

FINETTA. Huh!

MEZZETIN. [*noticing the food for the first time*]
Who's been having a feast here?
[*He draws up a chair and sits down.*]

FINETTA. Margot and Gilles.

MEZZETIN. [*tipping up the wine bottle*]
Wouldn't you know it? Not a drop left. That's the gratitude of the world. Dancing Dolls like Gilles and Margot always getting the best of everything; while true artists are equally sure to always come out at the small end of the horn.

FINETTA. [*helping herself out of the basket*]
I don't suppose Margot ever had a truly spiritual thought in her life.

MEZZETIN. [*with a gesture of superiority*]
Poof! They have no fine feelings, no dignity of soul, no sense of the all-pervading spirit of tragedy.

FINETTA. Oh, I'm tired of it! I wish I never had to see Gilles again.

MEZZETIN. [*beginning to eat*] Tush! It's the old story. Everyone mismated. Lovers unhappy. You and Gilles, Margot and I. It's the tragic rectangle.

FINETTA. But *we're* the only unhappy ones. It doesn't seem fair!

MEZZETIN. [*his mouth full*] I shall retire to private life. If the public won't appreciate me, let it do without me. In some isolated retreat, I shall muse upon the terrible cosmic hollowness, the futility of tragic genius.

FINETTA. But what about *me*? What's to become of *me*?

MEZZETIN. [*gloomily*] I see it all. You shall be my wife. We will forget the sneers of the world. Our mutual unhappiness makes us marvellously suited to each other.

FINETTA. But what are we going to live on?

MEZZETIN.

"Thus, Cæsar, musing on the shattered gods,
Forsook the rostrum for the lonely hills."

[*He thinks for a moment, then slaps
his knee.*]

I will sell my interest in this company to Gilles.

FINETTA. But Gilles hasn't any money!

MEZZETIN. True! Let me think.

CLEMENTINA. [*outside*] Oh, Mr. Gilles! Mr. Gilles, are you there?

MEZZETIN. [*startled*] Ah!

FINETTA. Who's that?

MEZZETIN. [*jumping up*] It's the village heiress! It's the solution of our difficulty!

CLEMENTINA. [*at the door*] Mr. Gilles! Oh, Mr. Gilles! May I come in?

[*She enters at the right.*]

MEZZETIN. [*bowing*]

“Twas thus Aurora, with her golden smile,
Awoke new summer in the heart of Mars.”

CLEMENTINA. [*taken aback at seeing MEZZETIN*] I—I beg your pardon, I was looking for Mr. Gilles.

MEZZETIN. I’ve just sent him to meet you at the inn. Permit me!

[*He offers her a chair.*]

CLEMENTINA. [*very bashfully*] I—I’m afraid I’m intruding.

MEZZETIN. [*quite at his ease*] Allow me to present my fiancee, Mistress Finetta. My dear, this is the young lady I’ve been telling you about, the charming young lady with such remarkable dramatic talents.

[*He hands CLEMENTINA into the chair. She sits down stiffly, with evident embarrassment.*]

CLEMENTINA. You’re very kind, Mr. Mezzetin. I thought you were angry with me when you left the Blue Pig in such a hurry.

MEZZETIN. [*in an injured tone*] Angry at you! Oh, my dear young lady, how very absurd! I was merely anxious to consult Mistress Finetta, as promptly as possible, about our little business transaction.

CLEMENTINA. [*looking stupidly at FINETTA*] Business transaction?

MEZZETIN. She's enchanted with the arrangement.

CLEMENTINA. Arrangement?

MEZZETIN. I exchange my interest in this organization, including all scenery, costumes, properties, musical instruments and live stock, for your country estate. Madame, I congratulate you!

CLEMENTINA. But, Mr. Mezzetin—oh dear—I hardly know—

MEZZETIN. Now, now! Pray don't overwhelm me with your thanks.

CLEMENTINA. [*wringing her hands*] Oh dear, I hardly know what to say! I hardly know anything about acting—I'm afraid I've made a mistake—I hardly know anything at all.

MEZZETIN. Don't distress yourself. A woman's success on the stage isn't purely a matter of technique. It's appearance that counts; an appearance like yours, an emotional disposition—it's really better if she doesn't know anything.

CLEMENTINA. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What will Mr. Gilles say, if he thinks I'm running after him?

MEZZETIN. He's overjoyed.

CLEMENTINA. It is a temptation—Oh dear! Oh dear! I hardly know what to do.

MEZZETIN. [*picking up his cloak*] Bravo! Then it's all settled. I'll look for our friend, the notary. Madame, I congratulate you with all my heart!

[*There is a sound of voices outside.*]

FINETTA. [*listening*] There's the notary now.

MEZZETIN. [*rubbing his hands*] Good! He can draw up the documents.

CLEMENTINA. [*much excited*] Oh dear! Oh dear! I hear Mr. Gilles's voice.

GILLES. [*outside*] It doesn't matter at all, sir, it doesn't matter at all! The what-you-may-call-it's of no consequence whatever. It's the thingumajig that counts.

[*Enter the NOTARY and GILLES, arm in arm, followed by MARGOT and BUFFO.*]

THE NOTARY. But there are certain legal points of a most delicate nature. The locus tenantibus for example, and the fides in particularum.

[*MEZZETIN spreads his cloak to hide CLEMENTINA.*]

MARGOT. Never mind the tenantibus and the particularum. It's the garden I want to know about!

BUFFO. I can't seem to get this all straight!

MEZZETIN. [*seizing the NOTARY's hand*] My dear friend! My very dear friend!

[*He keeps between CLEMENTINA and the others.*]

THE NOTARY. Pray, sir, don't distract my attention!

MEZZETIN. But this is most urgent! Here's a young lady that's just induced me to purchase her share of a country estate and she's naturally most anxious to close the transaction before I alter my mind.

THE NOTARY. Dear, dear! This is most confusing! May I ask, sir, to what young lady you refer?

MEZZETIN. [*stepping back and disclosing his prize*] The young lady will speak for herself.

BUFFO. Clementina!

[*The NOTARY puts his glasses on and recognizes CLEMENTINA.*]

THE NOTARY. Dear, dear! This is most confusing.

CLEMENTINA. [*rising*] Oh, Mr. Notary, I hardly know how to explain. Oh dear! I hardly know anything at all.

[*She sinks back again into the chair.*]

THE NOTARY. Ah, that's better! That's much better! When one asks for legal advice, one isn't expected to know anything.

GILLES. [*to MEZZETIN*] Confound it all! Just when I have the what-do-you-call-it all figured out, you go and stick *your* nose into it. Can't you wait till I've finished my business with the what's-his-name here?

MARGOT. But I thought it *was* all settled. We're to get the nice wet garden.

GILLES. Of course, it's all settled; all but signing the what-do-you-call it. We're to have the inside of the house.

MEZZETIN. [*advancing upon GILLES*] *We? We?* May I ask whom you mean by *we*?

MARGOT. Gilles and I have bought a farm. We're going to be married and settle down.

MEZZETIN. [*in a rage*] Ten Thousand Thunders! Do you mean to tell me that you're thinking of marrying that numskull? That you're deliberately deserting me; that you've actually forgotten all sense of loyalty and gratitude?

GILLES. [*also becoming angry*] Hold your horses there! Hold your horses!

MEZZETIN. [*to GILLES*] Don't come in my way, knave, or I'll crack your head like one of your wooden eggs. I'll beat you within an inch of your silly life! I'll teach you to ruin my happiness! [*The two men glare at each other.*]

FINETTA. [*wringing her hands*] Oh dear! Oh dear!

MARGOT. Don't let them hurt each other!

CLEMENTINA. [*to MEZZETIN*] But I thought you wanted to buy my share of the farm so that you could marry Mistress Finetta.

GILLES. What's that? You marry Finetta! Damn it, you've been trying to steal her affections behind my back.

[*He moves toward MEZZETIN.*]

MEZZETIN. [*backing away from him*] Let's look at this thing rationally!

MARGOT. [*running to MEZZETIN*] I won't stand by and see you hurt!

FINETTA. [*running to GILLES*] Don't, oh don't do anything rash!

CLEMENTINA. [*running to BUFFO*] O Buffo! Buffo! O Saint Stephen, and Saint Edgar!

BUFFO. [*clasping her in his arms*] I can't seem to get this straight.

[*FINETTA clings to GILLES, who glares at MEZZETIN. MARGOT clings to MEZZETIN, who looks sheepish. CLEMENTINA clings to BUFFO who looks completely mystified.*]

THE NOTARY. [*wringing his hands*] Dear me! Dear me! This is most confusing! Here's Mr. Buffo and Madame Clementina, joint owners in a poultry farm. Here's Mr. Gilles and Mistress Margot have bought Mr. Buffo's share, and here's Mr. Mezzetin and Mistress Finetta have bought Madame Clementina's share, and here's Mr. Buffo and Madame Clementina have bought a whole theatrical company.

BUFFO. I can't seem to get this straight at all.

THE NOTARY. Dear me! Dear me! I never remember such a rush of business. Two transactions in one day. That means seven hundred and thirty transactions in a year. If it goes on like this, I shall be a rich man.

[The music strikes up again outside.]

MARGOT. *[pricking up her ears]* Listen!

GILLES. It's time for the evening performance.

MEZZETIN. Zounds! I had quite forgotten it!

FINETTA. So had I!

[They begin to dance a little in pairs.]

MARGOT. *[to MEZZETIN]* Then you won't desert me?

GILLES. *[to FINETTA]* Then you love me after all?

MEZZETIN. Come, the audience is waiting!

FINETTA. *[hopping up and down]* I feel just like dancing!

[They all join hands and circle around BUFFO, CLEMENTINA, and THE NOTARY, who stand huddled together in the centre of the stage.]

MARGOT. Come on everybody!

GILLES. Right you are!

MEZZETIN. Come on! Come on!

FINETTA. Come on!

MARGOT. Hurrah!

GILLES. We're off!

MEZZETIN. Hooray!

FINNETTA. Ho, ho!

[They let go of hands and run off through the back curtain, laughing. BUFFO wipes his face with a red handkerchief.]

THE NOTARY. Dear, dear, dear! Everything seems most confusing!

BUFFO. I never will be able to get this straight!

CLEMENTINA. *[clinging to BUFFO]* Hadn't we better keep the poultry farm and get married right away?

BUFFO. *There!* You've hit the nail on the head!

CURTAIN.

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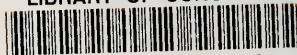
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