

THE MATCHMAKER SYNOPSIS



ACT 1

The play opens in **Horace Vandergelder's** living room, located above his feed and supplies store, in Yonkers, New York.

Mr. Vandergelder is in the midst of a heated conversation with **Ambrose Kemper**, a young artist, about his niece, Ermengarde. Ambrose and Ermengarde want to get married, but Mr. Vandergelder won't allow it due to Ambrose's artistic pursuits.



Mr. Vandergelder is making preparations for his afternoon trip to New York City. He places his newly "promoted" chief clerk **Cornelius Hackl** in charge of the store while he is away.

Vandergelder talks to **Ermengarde** and tries to change her mind about Ambrose, but she protests she's in love with him.



Malachi Stacks, a gruff but good-natured man, enters the shop looking for a job as Vandergelder's newest apprentice. Though Vandergelder has his reservations, he agrees to hire him.

Vandergelder explains to the audience that he has decided to get married for several reasons, but mainly to find someone to keep the house in order and bring some joy back to his days after his late wife's death 20 years ago.



After Vandergelder leaves, Ambrose tries to convince Ermengarde to elope with him. She refuses due to the social implications.

Mrs. Dolly Gallagher Levi enters the room mid-conversations. She advises Ambrose to wait on the elopement and offers to help the young couple. At first, Ambrose refuses, but after some convincing from Dolly, he agrees to let her assist in their planning.



Vandergelder enters in his parade uniform. He informs Dolly of his plans to marry Mrs. Irene Malloy, a widowed milliner in New York City. In order to distract him from proposing to Mrs. Malloy, Dolly invents an imaginary young woman named "Ernestina Simple."



Dolly arranges a dinner date for Vandergelder, "Miss Simple" and herself at the Harmonia Gardens restaurant in New York that evening.

Vandergelder tells store clerks Cornelius Hackl and **Barnaby Tucker** that he is going away for the evening and is leaving them in charge of the store.

After Vandergelder leaves for his parade, a restless Cornelius convinces Barnaby to close the store for the rest of the day and go explore New York City together.



Dolly takes Ermengarde to the station and everyone travels to New York City.

The audience is transported to **Mrs. Irene Malloy's** hat shop, where Mrs. Malloy and her assistant **Minnie Fay** are working on hats.

Mrs. Malloy explains to Minnie Fay that she has decided to marry Mr. Vandergelder, not because she loves him but because she wants to leave the millinery business behind and finally have some fun.



Barnaby and Cornelius hide in the hat store after spotting their boss Vandergelder in the street. They decide to pretend they are wealthy gentlemen to impress Mrs. Malloy.

While chatting with Mrs. Malloy, Cornelius and Barnaby discover that she's the woman Mr. Vandergelder has plans to marry. When Dolly and Vandergelder approach the store, they hide.



Mrs. Malloy creates a distraction and escorts Dolly and Vandergelder into her workroom.

A love-struck Cornelius talks to the audience about how enchanted he is with Mrs. Malloy and has a new perspective on life.



Dolly discovers Cornelius and Barnaby. She attempts to cover for Cornelius when Mrs. Malloy mentions him in front of Vandergelder by saying he leads an extraordinary double-life.

When a sneeze exposes that men are hiding around the shop, a frustrated Vandergelder leaves, followed by Dolly.



An irritated Mrs. Malloy convinces Cornelius and Barnaby to take Minnie Fay and herself out to a fabulous dinner. The four young people leave for an eventful evening.

(APT's production takes an intermission here.)

ACT 2

Ermengarde, Ambrose and Dolly arrive at the Harmonia Gardens restaurant. Dolly moves Ambrose and Ermengarde to the second level of the restaurant.

Vandergelder arrives with Malachi Stacks and a cabman. He orders Stacks and the cabman to watch Ermengarde and make sure she is taken to her aunt's house at the end of the meal.



Mrs. Malloy, Cornelius, Barnaby and Minnie Fay enter the restaurant. At first, the broke Barnaby and Cornelius are reluctant to place an order with Rudolph the waiter, but Cornelius decides to impress Mrs. Malloy by ordering a full extravagant meal, knowing he has no way to pay for it.

After a skuffle about table reservations, a screen is placed dividing what will be Mr. Vandergelder's table from the Barnaby, Minnie Fay, Cornelius and Mrs. Malloy party. Cornelius and Barnaby discover that Vandergelder is dining right next to them.

Vandergelder prepares for dinner with Dolly and "Miss Simple" and drops his wallet. After checking with Vandergelder, Malachi Stacks returns the wallet to Cornelius.





Dolly, who looks stunning, arrives at the restaurant. She tells Vandergelder that they will be dining along tonight since the imaginary "Miss Simple" has ran away to be married.

Throughout dinner, Dolly confronts and teases Vandergelder about his ornery, friendless behavior. She subliminally plants the idea of the two marrying by saying she is extremely uninterested in the prospect.



When Vandergelder wants to pay the bill, he can't find his wallet.

Dolly attempts to improve Vandergelder's spirits by dancing with him. While on the dance floor, Vandergelder discovers Cornelius (disguised as a girl), Mrs. Malloy, Ermengarde and Ambrose. A madcap chase ensues.

Ermengarde's aunt, the eccentric **Miss Flora Van Huysen**, anxiously awaits the arrival of her niece and Ambrose with her **housekeeper**.



A mistaken (and drunk) cabman and Malachi have brought Cornelius and Barnaby (still disguised as a girl) to Miss Van Huysen's home, thinking they were Ermengarde and Ambrose Kemper.

Determined to help the young couple, Miss Van Huysen comforts her two guests and prepares a bath for Barnaby, thinking he is Ermengarde.



The real Ermengarde and Ambrose arrive at the house. Trying to hide who she is with, Ermengarde decides Ambrose should pretend to be "Cornelius Tucker." Mix-ups and mayhem ensue.

Dolly arrives to the home with Mrs. Malloy and Minnie Fay. Vandergelder bursts into the room, mad at everyone.

To calm everyone down, Miss Van Huysen brings them into her dining room for gingerbread and coffee, leaving Dolly alone.

Dolly talks to her late husband Levi and asks for his permission to move on.

Dolly explains to the audience that while she plans on marrying Vandergelder for his money, her main motive is to continue living a full life. And that takes some money.





Mr. Vandergelder enters with coffee for Dolly. He shares that he has forgiven Ermengarde and Ambrose and will allow them to be married. And that he has made Cornelius his business partner.

A reformed Vandergelder asks Dolly to marry him. She accepts, and returns his lost wallet.

Barnaby shares that Mrs. Malloy and Cornelius are engaged. Mr. Vandergelder shares the news that Dolly has (finally) consented to marry him.

Dolly tells the audience that there is no more play left, but asks Barnaby to explain what the moral of the story was. He tells the audience he thinks it's about adventure and living a full life before wishing everyone in the audience a good night.

The End.



