

Act II

Scene Four

**NATHAN** enters from down right, below the curtain, as  
**GOLDY** enters opposite.

NATHAN

And that very afternoon, a wedding took place—

GOLDY

—and that's all that needs to be said!

Music up as the curtain rises to reveal the hall with a canopy at  
upstage center. The **COMPANY** is dancing before the ceremony.

**WEDDING DANCE #1**

Music under.

SHAYA

Where is everyone? Why are so few here?

TZALEL

You saw the invitations? No one could afford to come.

BIELE

They arrived in a carriage—a matched pair of horses!

ASRIEL

But certainly the families—

FLORA

They're orphans, more's the pity! Both of them!

DAVID

It's not a good time for a wedding. Everyone I know is out of work.

BIELE

Maybe they should have put it off?

FLORA

But they've been engaged for two years!

TZALEL

Who can afford a wedding present with work so scarce?

DAVID

I barely got my suit out of hock, myself.

HEYMAN

I sent a clock to their apartment—

BIELE

I saw it—the apartment—three whole rooms!—

TZALEL

With a wet-sink in the kitchen—

TAMARA

—and a water closet down the hallway—

BIELE

—on the second floor, even!

HEYMAN

That clock cost me a week's wages. I've lived on kreplach for the last three days!

TAMARA

Don't worry—they're giving us dinner after! You'll make good then.

HEYMAN

I certainly hope so!

DAVID

Maybe they could give us a hand with the rent.

BIELE

Hush! This won't do. We can't wait any longer!

FLORA

Everyone who's coming is here already.

TAMARA

That settles it. It's time. Where's the bard?

ALL

The bard! The bard!

TZALEL (as BARD)

(Crossing to center.)

Ladies! Ladies! It is time to begin the ceremony. Come, ladies, let us veil the bride!

The **WOMEN** of the **COMPANY** cluster around **GOLDY** at left while the **MEN** group themselves at right. One **WOMAN** places a chair at down left of center, where **GOLDY** sits. **TZALEL**, as **BARD**, draws himself up at center and delivers his wedding declamation. During the song, the **COMPANY** not otherwise occupied place the canopy at center.

### THE SONG OF THE BARD

**TZALEL**

Silence, good women, give heed to my verses!

Tonight, bride, thou dost stand before the Uppermost.  
Pray to him to bless thy union,  
To let thee and thy mate live a hundred and twenty peaceful years,  
To give you your daily bread,  
To keep hunger from your door.

The **WOMEN** begin to weep theatrically.

Wail, bride, wail! This is a time of tears.  
Think of thy past days:  
Alas! they are gone to return nevermore.

And thy good mother beyond the seas,  
And thy father in his grave  
Near where thy cradle was rocked,  
Weep, bride, weep!  
Though his soul is better off  
Than we are here underneath  
In dearth and cares and ceaseless pangs,  
Weep, bride, weep!  
Weep, sweet bride, weep!

Wail, bride, wail! This is a time of tears.  
Think of thy past days:  
Alas! they are gone to return nevermore.  
Weep, bride, weep!  
Weep, sweet bride, weep!

**GOLDY**, increasingly distraught at the song, makes an effort to stand,  
but collapses.

BIELE

The bride is fainting! Water! Quick!

One of the **MEN** hands a glass of water to **TAMARA**, who kneels and  
revives **GOLDY**, helping her back into her chair. **DAVID** and **HEYMAN**  
produce candles and light them, standing on either side of **NATHAN**,  
who holds a veil.

FLORA

But of course! She's fasted all day.

TAMARA

(To **TZALEL**.)

Murderer that you are!

BIELE

She's going to be all right. Let's proceed. Where is the groom?

TZALEL

(Rejoining the men.)

The groom! The groom!

Music under. **NATHAN**, escorted by **DAVID** and **HEYMAN** with  
lighted candles, crosses solemnly to **GOLDY**, who stands to meet him.  
He places a veil over her face as she sings, then leads her by the hand  
to center. They cross slowly, as **GOLDY** sings, until they are under the  
canopy, where **TZALEL** joins them.

### **EVERY WOMAN I HAVE EVER KNOWN**

**GOLDY**

Now I am a bride, like Mama was,  
Like Auntie Sarah and their mother

Who died before I could be born.  
I've only ever seen her picture.

Like every woman I have ever known  
And every woman I have never known.

**GOLDY** circles him three times.

I am a bride now, with a home and a hearth  
Where a fire will burn in the dark.  
With a clock and a chair, his step on the stair  
In the evening to tell me he's there.

Like every woman I have ever known  
And every woman I have never known.

Before long we're no longer a pair  
And we nod to the neighbors in the park.  
I light the candles every sabbath,  
Cover my head and say sabbath prayers.

Like every woman I have ever known  
And every woman I have never known.

Music continues under.

**TZALEL** (as CANTOR)

(Spoken.)

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, who created joy and gladness, groom and bride, mirth, song, delight and rejoicing, love and harmony, and peace and companionship.

**TZALEL** offers a glass of wine first to **NATHAN**, then to **GOLDY**, then wraps it in a linen cloth and places it on the floor between them as **GOLDY** continues.

**GOLDY**

Now I am a bride, a married woman,  
Now I am the mistress of the house.  
Now I am the keeper of a home.  
Like mama was, like every woman—

Like every woman I have ever known  
And every woman I have never known.

NATHAN

(Placing a ring on **GOLDY's** finger.)

Be thou dedicated to me by this ring, according to the laws of Moses and Israel.

**NATHAN** crushes the glass underfoot. The **COMPANY** erupts in congratulations as **GOLDY** draws **NATHAN** downstage center.

ALL

Mazeltov!

GOLDY

Oh Nathan! I so wanted to speak to you today, to see you, but of course you couldn't see the bride. I went by the apartment—our new home!—this morning. I had to see what had arrived—still nothing more!

NATHAN

Not quite nothing, dearest. My employer has given us a set of dishes, direct from his stock. They're the finest sort he has. I brought them home yesterday, but I wanted them to be a surprise.

GOLDY

A set of dishes then, and a clock and a chair, but nothing more—no bed, even! Where will we sleep, tonight? Will we rock ourselves to sleep? I told myself that our guests would bring presents to the reception, maybe, as they do, nowadays. But look—look how few have come! Where are our friends, Nathan?

NATHAN

Goldy—

GOLDY

And we have spent every cent we had on this grand wedding, and now we are left without money for furniture, and there are no guests to send us any, and the supper will be thrown out, and everything is lost, and I am to blame for it all!

NATHAN

Don't take it to heart.

GOLDY

And I am not the Goldy I used to be. I am a married woman now, like mamma, or auntie, or Mrs. Volpiansky.

NATHAN

There is a God in heaven, Goldy. We will find a way.

**NO PRAYER WILL GO UNHEARD**

NATHAN

I promised I would honor you and care for you,  
To cherish and be there for you  
As long as I shall breathe and still have life.

I promised you I'd marry you and bear with you  
For all the years I share with you  
And carry you across the threshold as my wife.

Above the street's a second-floor apartment  
With a window to the air-shaft and a hearth.  
With three rooms bare—just a clock and a chair  
And a candle on the mantel, warding off the dark.

Above that the glories of seven more stories  
And the stories every story can tell—  
Of the neighbors living there, of their joys and their despairs,  
And the lighting of their candles at the bell.

But high above the tenements, higher than the stars  
The Uppermost is watching over everyone—over everything,  
And no leaf will fall without he knows the cause  
And no prayer will go unheard.

Down on the street a peddler's hawking dishes.  
Far up above the Uppermost looks down.  
And between the two is me and you,  
In the warmest, most endearing home downtown.

And on the second story, just above the street  
I will be watching over you—watching over us,  
And no tear will fall, in the parlor or the hall,  
And no prayer will go unheard.

Music continues under. As the **COMPANY** dances, it brings two chairs  
down right and left of center and, pulling **GOLDY** and **NATHAN** apart,  
seat them in each chair, men to the right and women to the left, as  
before.

## WEDDING DANCE #2

GOLDY

Do you know what you are to me now? A husband! And I am your wife! Do you know what it means? Do you, Nathan?

NATHAN

I do, my little sparrow. Just don't worry over the wedding presents.

GOLDY

My husband! My husband! My husband!

NATHAN

I am your husband. And you are my wife!

The **COMPANY** surround them, dancing, and lifts them in their chairs, carrying them off to the music as the scene ends.