

Act I

Scene Eight

The **COMPANY** enters, carrying the dining room furniture to stage right, as **GOLDY** continues to rock upstage center. They set up **BIELE's** family's apartment, with plates, glasses and a large platter on the table. **COMPANY** members turn away from the action to comment as they come and go. Music continues 'ticking' under throughout.

TAMARA

Ever since the incident at the Lipman's shop—

BIELE

—Heyman was no longer present in Biele's thoughts—

NATHAN

—except in the pitiful, cowering attitude in which he had sat by his sewing machine through that awful scene.

HEYMAN crosses down and stands at down right, pacing and fretting.

DAVID

But for Heyman, it was a different story.

HEYMAN

Why *should* one be ordered about like that? She is no servant, is she?

SHAYA

But when his day's work was over, Heyman's heart failed him to face Biele—

ASRIEL

—and although he was panting to see her—

FLORA

—he did not call at her house.

TZALEL

On the next evening he betook himself to the Division Street tenement where his sweetheart lived with her mother on the top floor—

SHAYA

—but on coming in front of the building, his courage melted away.

ASRIEL

He could not nerve himself up to the terrible meeting.

NATHAN

And so day after day passed—

TAMARA enters with a cake on a plate and sets it on the table.

TAMARA

—each day increasing the barrier to the coveted visit.

The **COMPANY** assembles around the table, forming **DAVID** and **BIELE's** engagement party. **HEYMAN** finally makes it to left of center, outside the apartment.

BIELE

(Before taking her place at the head of the table.)

At last, one evening—

DAVID

(As he takes his place beside **BIELE**.)

—about a fortnight after the date of the fiasco—

TZALEL produces a book before turning to the scene and miming reading the writ of betrothment to the couple.

NATHAN

(Looking out from behind **TZALEL**.)

Heyman forgot to lose courage—

TAMARA

—and briskly mounted the four flights of stairs to the apartment.

HEYMAN nervously positions himself outside **BIELE's** door. He sings as, the reading of the writ over, **DAVID** and **BIELE** take up the platter and, surrounded by the **COMPANY**, cross to below the table and, each holding one side of the platter, prepare to dash it on the floor.

ANOTHER MAN'S BEST GIRL'S DOOR

HEYMAN

I bought a watch and a fine gold chain,
And had it engraved with both of our names,
And I'd meant to present it that same afternoon—
But that's not how it happened!

Instead I was confounded, and then I was afraid,
And I went home astounded and a little amazed,
With the watch in my pocket, wrapped up and festooned
With a real silk ribbon. So it happened.

I swore next day I'd show up at her door
And present myself and with a present, and, more,
I'd make plain my feelings, unburden my heart—
But I was confounded with—a headache!

So a week went by, and then another
And I lost the nerve to face her mother
At the door with a present with a ribbon, and my heart
In my mouth, and my hat in my hand, and my heart
On my sleeve, and what kind of a man
Can't bring himself to climb the stairs
And knock on his best girl's door?
So—knock on my best girl's door!

HEYMAN gathers himself up to knock at the door as
DAVID and **BIELE** raise the plate and let it fall,
shattering it on the floor. Congratulations from the
COMPANY, music under.

ALL

Good luck! Good luck! Mazel-tov!

NATHAN

Good luck to you, David!

FLORA

Good luck to you, Biele!

ASRIEL

May you live to a happy old age together!

HEYMAN's face falls as he realizes what the sound means.

HEYMAN

Well I brought the watch on its fine gold chain,
Which I'd had engraved with both of our names,
And I climbed the stairs this afternoon—
But something different happened!

I swore, yesterday I'd show up at her door
And present myself and with a present, and, more—
But time doesn't wait for a fellow to work
His courage up—so it happened.

Once a week went by, and then another
And I lost the nerve to face her mother
And I lost the chance to declare my intentions
Thanks to time and fate and the intervention
Of another fellow with the same intentions—
Intentions I hadn't had the courage to mention—
And here I stand in the hall before—
Another man's best girl's door!

TAMARA

(Serving up cake.)

Feige, why don't you take some cake? Don't be so bashful!

TZALEL

Here is luck!

HEYMAN

I swore, next day I'd show up at her door
And present myself and with a present, and, more—
But time doesn't wait for a fellow to work
His courage up—so it happened

Once a week went by, and then another
And I lost the nerve to face her mother
And I lost the chance to declare my intentions
Thanks to time and fate and the intervention
Of another fellow with the same intentions—
Intentions I hadn't had the courage to mention—
And here I stand in the hall before—
Another man's best girl's door!

ACT ONE FINALE; QUARTET

HEYMAN

And who can I blame but my own foolish heart,
Too shy to give over and too late to start.
And what girl would wait for a fellow who can't
Show up at his best girl's door?

Once one chance, and then another
And I lost the nerve to face her mother
And I lost the chance to declare my intentions
Thanks to time and fate and the intervention
Of another fellow with the same intentions—
Intentions I hadn't had the courage to mention—
And here I stand as I did before—
And what happens now?

SHAYA exits right. **GOLDY**, above, stands and sings as she paces in her apartment.

GOLDY

A chair, a clock—
And the only one who knocks
Is my beloved here to see me home.
And all day long, I've sat and moaned
In our empty rooms
For a chair and a clock
And a dining room set and a chair!

Her song joins with **HEYMAN's**, forming a duet.

But where's the chair? It isn't there yet!
There's a nowhere where the chair should be,
As part of a proper parlor set!

But so far—a clock, a clock! A clock!
And a chair to sit and rock
While waiting for a knock on the door.
Well, that's what waiting's for.
And what happens now?

SHAYA re-enters from left with a volume of the Talmud. He joins them: a trio.

SHAYA

Maybe in Jerusalem the sun is so much brighter.
Maybe in Jerusalem the snow is so much whiter
Than anything I've seen before, but wonders enough

Are wonders enough. If in a new Jerusalem
The streets can run with sacred conversation,
Then who commands the argument commands his own new nation!

FLORA rises from the engagement party and crosses down right.

FLORA

A dentist, a doctor, a clerk or a lawyer,
A reader of serious novels and tracts:
Cervantes' Quixote, Walt Whitman, Tom Sawyer.
A man in possession of up-to-date facts:

A banker, a broker, a man of strong views.
No peddler or tailor, no hawker of news,
No butcher or collier, and no common trader,
An American man...

Finally, **DAVID** and **BIELE** cross downstage and join in. The rest of the **COMPANY** strikes the party furniture as the song concludes.

BIELE

But where I'd only come to doubt, now I was sure,
For all at once I turned around and there you were!

DAVID

And courage is an easy thing:
It comes along
The way the tide obeys the moon—
It comes along.

BIELE

And the moon on the harbor and the moon at your window
And the moon that lights the streets—it's the self-same moon!

DAVID

And from quarter to crescent, look long enough, and very soon—

DAVID and BIELE

Very soon—very soon!

The songs build and come to a climax. Lights out.

END ACT ONE