

## Act Two

SCENE. *Exterior of Monastery by moonlight. Mountain range and river in distance.*

RISOTTO *discovered.*

RISOTTO (*looking at his watch*). Now, Minestra, where are you? This is the appointed spot, and you are not here. Dear, dear, dear! She never kept me waiting before. (*Looking off.*) Ah, I see her! Here she comes, toddling along like an old lady of eighty! What a thorough little artist she is! She keeps up the character even when she thinks no one is looking!

*Enter MINESTRA, now really transformed into an old crone.*

RISOTTO. My darling, you're late. Why — what a wonderful disguise! I never saw anything more perfect in my life! I can hardly believe that this is my pretty, dainty, delicate, little bride!

MINESTRA. Oh, Risotto, don't be angry with your little wifey, but something terrible has happened — I — I can't get it off!

RISOTTO. Can't get what off, my pet?

MINESTRA. The make-up! I lined my face, just as you told me — and — and now they're real wrinkles!

RISOTTO (*examining her face*). What!

MINESTRA. Then you told me to cover my teeth with cobbler's wax. They've all come out! Then you told me to pretend I had gout and rheumatism — and I've got 'em! Ugh! (*Groaning.*)

RISOTTO. But, my dearest girl —

MINESTRA. Then my hair! Oh, my poor hair!

RISOTTO. It's a capital wig.

MINESTRA. That's it — it's not a wig! It's my own, and it won't come off — and I hate it!

RISOTTO. This is a most remarkable circumstance. How did it happen?

MINESTRA. After I had dressed myself as an old woman, we all drank some wine out of the conjuror's wine-skin, and I gradually became an old woman of seventy-four!

RISOTTO. This is most embarrassing. I may say, most disappointing. On one's wedding day, too!

MINESTRA. My poor husband, I'm so sorry for you! But I'm an old woman, and you won't be troubled with me long; that's one comfort to you.

RISOTTO. Yes — I mean, no. I — I trust that, notwithstanding this — this modification of the implied terms of our agreement — there are many years of — of — yes, bliss — in store for us. (*Aside.*) If it had only happened yesterday, it wouldn't have mattered so much!

MINESTRA. Of course, you won't love your little woman now!

RISOTTO. Oh, I beg your pardon. I shall have much pleasure in — in showing you every attention compatible with the — the respect due to a lady of your advanced years, my — my pet!