

Exeunt all except PIETRO, BARTOLO, and NITA. PIETRO sits in great pain and distress. BARTOLO and NITA make ineffective attempts to move and speak, but they have “run down.”

PIETRO (*observing their efforts*). Now, then, what’s wrong with you? Oh, I see.
(*Winds them up.*)

Spoken together very rapidly:

[BARTOLO. Upon my honour, this is a pretty state of things.
Clockwork for life, I suppose! It’s monstrous — outrageous!
What’s to become of Nita, and, above all, what’s to become for
me?

[NITA. Well, a nice mess you’ve made of this; to go and
lose the only thing that could bring us back to life again. What do
you mean by it, you ridiculous old donkey?

PIETRO. What do you want?

NITA. Well, if I’m to be Ophelia for the rest of my life, it would
be convenient to know what Ophelia did.

BARTOLO. She coaxed Hamlet, a good deal.

PIETRO. Nothing of the kind; she committed suicide because Hamlet
wouldn’t marry her.

NITA. What — lately?

PIETRO. Lately! Several hundred years ago. (*NITA and BARTOLO turn and
walk rapidly up stage.*) Where are you going?

NITA. We’re going back several hundred years.

PIETRO. It’s not necessary. You can do it here. (*NITA begins to cry.*)

BARTOLO. I have it. If Hamlet had married Ophelia she wouldn’t have
committed suicide.

PIETRO. Well? What then?

BARTOLO. What then? Why, if I marry her at once the motive for the act will
be removed!

PIETRO. Nonsense! Hamlet and Ophelia never married. It would be trifling
with the text.

BARTOLO. Anyhow, it’s a new reading. What! am I to be the only Hamlet
who is not permitted to discover new readings? Bah!