

ELVINO. I don't know how I shall accommodate them. My only bedroom is occupied by the exploded Alchemist, who is much too incomplete to be moved. There's the scullery. Do you think they'd put up with a shake-down in the scullery.

ALFREDO. I don't know. The Duke is an awful stickler for etiquette.

ULTRICE. He gave an inkeeper at Palermo six months because he used his pocket-handkerchief in his presence.

TERESA. And he fined the Mayor of Syracuse a hundred crowns because he didn't.

ELVINO. This is terrible. I know I shall make some fearful mistake with these people! I've never in my life addressed anybody of higher rank than an Oil and Italian Warehouseman!

ALFREDO. My good sir, they're not people — they're personages.

ELVINO. Of course they are! There I go — putting my foot into it at the first go off! If I could only practise a little. Now, if you'd be so kind — so very kind — as to impersonate the Duke, just for a dress-rehearsal of the reception (I've got a lot of beautiful clothes left behind by some strolling players in pawn for their bill), you shall be treated with all the consideration due to your exalted rank, and have the entire run of the bar, except rum-shrub!

ALFREDO. It's a tempting offer. But I must have a Duchess.

ELVINO. Of course you must. (*Aside.*) How many Duchesses go to a Duke?

ALFREDO. Only one at a time.

ELVINO. You don't say so?

ALFREDO. Yes — Dukes are very particular about that.

ELVINO. Dear me! (*Aloud.*) Well, here are two to choose from — my cousin Teresa and my niece Ultrice — both charming.

ULTRICE *and* TERESA. What's that?

ELVINO. Well. One charming and one — umph! Will that do?

ULTRICE *and* TERESA. That will do!

ELVINO. Now, come; we've no time to lose. Choose your Duchess and begin.