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Marco: Gentlemen, we are much obliged to you for your expressions of satisfaction and good feeling— I say, we are much obliged to you for your expressions of satisfaction and good feeling.

All: We heard you.

Marco: We are delighted, at any time, to fall in with sentiments so charmingly expressed.

All: That's all right.

Giuseppe: At the same time there is just one little grievance that we should like to ventilate.

All: (*angrily*) What?

Giuseppe: Don't be alarmed— it's not serious. It is arranged that, until it is decided which of us two is the actual King, we are to act as one person.

Giorgio: Exactly.

Giuseppe: Now, although we act as *one* person, we are, in point of fact, *two* persons.

Annibale: Ah, I don't think we can go into that. It is a legal fiction, and legal fictions are solemn things. Situated as we are, we can't recognize two independent responsibilities.

Giuseppe: No; but you can recognize two independent appetites. It's all very well to say we act as one person, but when you supply us with only one ration between us, I should describe it as a legal fiction carried a little too far.

Annibale: It's rather a nice point. I don't like to express an opinion off-hand. Suppose we reserve it for argument before the full Court?

Marco: Yes, but what are we to do in the meantime?

Marco & Giuseppe:
We want our tea.

Annibale: I think we may make an interim order for double rations on their Majesties' entering into the usual undertaking to indemnify in the event of an adverse decision?

Giorgio: That, I think, will meet the case. But you must work hard—stick to it—nothing like work.

Giuseppe: Oh, certainly. We quite understand that a man who holds the magnificent position of King should do something to justify it. We are called "Your Majesty"; we are allowed to buy ourselves magnificent clothes, our subjects frequently nod to us in the streets, the sentries always return our salutes, and we enjoy the inestimable privilege of heading the subscription lists to all the principal charities. In return for these advantages the least we can do is to make ourselves useful about the Palace.

- Giuseppe:** And now our lives are going to begin in real earnest! What's a bachelor? A mere nothing— he's a chrysalis. He can't be said to live— he exists.
- Marco:** What a delightful institution marriage is! Why have we wasted all this time? Why didn't we marry ten years ago?
- Tessa:** Because you couldn't find anybody nice enough.
- Gianetta:** Because you were waiting for *us*.
- Marco:** I suppose that *was* the reason. We were waiting for you without knowing it. (*Don Alhambra comes forward.*) Hallo!
- Don Alhambra:** Good morning.
- Giuseppe:** If this gentleman is an undertaker, it's a bad omen.
- Don Alhambra:** Ceremony of some sort going on?
- Giuseppe:** (*aside*) He *is* an undertaker! (*Aloud*) No— a little unimportant family gathering Nothing in *your* line.
- Don Alhambra:** Somebody's birthday, I suppose?
- Gianetta:** Yes, mine!
- Tessa:** And mine!
- Marco:** And mine!
- Giuseppe:** And mine!
- Don Alhambra:** Curious coincidence! And how old may you all be?
- Tessa:** It's a rude question— but about ten minutes.
- Don Alhambra:** Remarkably fine children! But surely you are jesting?
- Tessa:** In other words, we were married about ten minutes since.
- Don Alhambra:** Married! You don't mean to say you are married?
- Marco:** Oh yes, we are married.
- Don Alhambra:** What, both of you?
- All:** All four of us.
- Don Alhambra:** (*aside*) Bless my heart, how extremely awkward!
- Gianetta:** You don't mind, I suppose?
- Tessa:** You were not thinking of either of us for yourself, I presume? Oh, Giuseppe, look at him— he was. He's heartbroken!
- Don Alhambra:** No, no, I wasn't! I wasn't!
- Giuseppe:** Now, my man (*slapping him on the back*), we don't want anything in your line to-day, and if your curiosity's satisfied — you can go!
- Don Alhambra:** You mustn't call me your man. It's a liberty. I don't think you know who I am.
- Giuseppe:** Not we, indeed! We are jolly gondoliers, the sons of Baptisto Palmieri, who led the last revolution. Republicans, heart and soul, we hold all men to be equal. As we abhor oppression, we abhor kings: as we detest vainglory, we detest rank: as we despise effeminacy, we despise wealth. We are Venetian gondoliers— your equals in everything except our calling, and in that at once your masters and your servants.
- Don Alhambra:** Bless my heart, how unfortunate! One of you may be Baptisto's son, for anything I know to the contrary; but the other is no less a personage than the only son of the late King of Barataria.
- All:** What!
- Don Alhambra:** And I trust— I *trust* it was that one who slapped me on the shoulder and called me his man!
- Giuseppe:** One of us a king!
- Marco:** Not brothers!
- Tessa:** The King of Barataria!
- Gianetta:** Well, who'd have thought it!

(together)

Marco: But which is it?

Don Alhambra: What does it matter? As you are both Republicans, and hold kings in detestation, of course you'll abdicate at once. Good morning! (*going*)

Gianetta & Tessa: Oh, don't do that! (*Marco and Giuseppe stop him.*)

Giuseppe: Well, as to that, of course there are kings and kings. When I say that I detest kings, I mean I detest *bad* kings.

Don Alhambra: I see. It's a delicate distinction.

Giuseppe: Quite so. Now I can conceive a kind of king— an ideal king— the creature of my fancy, you know— who would be absolutely unobjectionable. A king, for instance, who would abolish taxes and make everything cheap, except gondolas—

Marco: And give a great many free entertainments to the gondoliers—

Giuseppe: And let off fireworks on the Grand Canal, and engage all the gondolas for the occasion—

Marco: And scramble money on the Rialto among the gondoliers.

Giuseppe: Such a king would be a blessing to his people; and, if I were king, that is the sort of king I would be.

Marco: And so would I!

Don Alhambra: Come, I'm glad to find your objections are not insuperable.

Marco & Giuseppe: Oh, they're not insuperable.

Gianetta & Tessa: No, they're not insuperable.

Giuseppe: Besides, we are open to conviction.

Gianetta: Yes; they are open to conviction.

Tessa: Oh! they've often been convicted.

Giuseppe: Our views may have been hastily formed on insufficient grounds. They may be crude, ill-digested, erroneous. I've a very poor opinion of the politician who is not open to conviction.

Tessa: (*to Gianetta*) Oh, he's a fine fellow!

Gianetta: Yes, that's the sort of politician for *my* money!

Don Alhambra: Then we'll consider it settled. Now, as the country is in a state of insurrection, it is absolutely necessary that you should assume the reins of government at once; and, until it is ascertained which of you is to be king, I have arranged that you will reign jointly, so that no question can arise hereafter as to the validity of any of your acts.

Marco: As one individual?

Don Alhambra: As one individual.

Giuseppe: (*linking himself with Marco*) Like this?

Don Alhambra: Something like that.

Marco: And we may take our friends with us, and give them places about the Court?

Don Alhambra: Undoubtedly. That's always done!

Marco: I'm convinced!

Giuseppe: So am I!

Tessa: Then the sooner we're off the better.

Gianetta: We'll just run home and pack up a few things (*going*)—

Don Alhambra: Stop, stop— that won't do at all— ladies are not admitted.

All: What!

Don Alhambra: Not admitted. Not at present. Afterwards, perhaps. We'll see.

Giuseppe: Why, you don't mean to say you are going to separate us from our wives!

Don Alhambra: (*aside*) This is very awkward! (*aloud*) Only for a time— a few months. After all, what is a few months?

Tessa: But we've only been married half an hour! (*Weeps.*)

- Don Alhambra:** And now I have some important news to communicate. His Grace the Duke of Plaza-Toro, Her Grace the Duchess, and their beautiful daughter Casilda—I say their beautiful daughter Casilda—
- Giuseppe:** We heard you.
- Don Alhambra:** Have arrived at Barataria, and may be here at any moment.
- Marco:** The Duke and Duchess are nothing to us.
- Don Alhambra:** But the daughter—the beautiful daughter! Aha! Oh, you're a lucky dog, one of you!
- Giuseppe:** I think you're a very incomprehensible old gentleman.
- Don Alhambra:** Not a bit—I'll explain. Many years ago when you (whichever you are) were a baby, you (whichever you are) were married to a little girl who has grown up to be the most beautiful young lady in Spain. That beautiful young lady will be here to claim you (whichever you are) in half an hour, and I congratulate that one (whichever it is) with all my heart.
- Marco:** Married when a baby!
- Giuseppe:** But we were married three months ago!
- Don Alhambra:** One of you—only one. The other (whichever it is) is an unintentional bigamist.
- Gianetta & Tessa:** *(coming forward)* Well, upon my word!
- Don Alhambra:** Eh? Who are these young people?
- Gianetta & Tessa:** Who are we? Why, their wives, of course. We've just arrived.
- Don Alhambra:** Their wives! Oh, dear, this is very unfortunate! Oh, dear, this complicates matters! Dear, dear, what will Her Majesty say?
- Gianetta:** And do you mean to say that one of these Monarchs was already married?
- Tessa:** And that neither of us will be a Queen?
- Don Alhambra:** That is the idea I intended to convey. *(Tessa and Gianetta begin to cry)*
- Giuseppe:** *(to Tessa)* Tessa, my dear, dear child—
- Tessa:** Get away! perhaps it's you!
- Marco:** *(to Gianetta)* My poor, poor little woman!
- Gianetta:** Don't! Who knows whose husband you are?
- Tessa:** And pray, why didn't you tell us all about it before they left Venice?
- Don Alhambra:** Because if I had, no earthly temptation would have induced these gentlemen to leave two such extremely fascinating and utterly irresistible little ladies!
- Tessa:** There's something in that.
- Don Alhambra:** I may mention that you will not be kept long in suspense, as the old lady who nursed the Royal child is at present in the Torture Chamber, waiting for me to interview her.
- Giuseppe:** Poor old girl. Hadn't you better go and put her out of her suspense?
- Don Alhambra:** Oh no—there's no hurry—she's all right. She has all the illustrated papers. However, I'll go and interrogate her, and, in the meantime, may I suggest the absolute propriety of your regarding yourselves as single young ladies. Good evening! *(Exit Don Alhambra.)*
- Gianetta:** Well, here's a pleasant state of things!
- Marco:** Delightful. One of us is married to two young ladies, and nobody knows which, and the other is married to one young lady whom nobody can identify!
- Gianetta:** And one of us is married to one of you, and the other is married to nobody.
- Tessa:** But which of you is married to which of us, and what's to become of the other? *(about to cry)*
- Giuseppe:** It's quite simple. Observe. Two husbands have managed to acquire three wives. Three wives—two husbands. *(Beckoning up)* That's two-thirds of a husband to each wife.
- Tessa:** O Mount Vesuvius, here we are in arithmetic! My good sir, one can't marry a vulgar fraction!
- Giuseppe:** You've no right to call me a vulgar fraction.
- Marco:** We are getting rather mixed. The situation is entangled. Let's try and comb it out.