

**START** — (GIANETTA and TESSA enter unobserved. The two girls, impelled by curiosity, remain listening at the back of the stage.)

DON AL. 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 —

GIU. We heard you.

DON AL. Have arrived at Barataria, and may be here at any moment.

MAR. The Duke and Duchess are nothing to us.

DON AL. But the daughter — the beautiful daughter! Aha! Oh, you're a lucky dog, one of you!

GIU. I think you're a very incomprehensible old gentleman.

DON AL. 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.

MAR. Married when a baby!

GIU. But we were married three months ago!

DON AL. One of you — only one. The other (whichever it is) is an unintentional bigamist.

GIA. and TESSA. (coming forward). Well, upon my word!

DON AL. Eh? Who are these young people?

TESSA. Who are we? Why, their wives, of course. We've just arrived.

DON AL. Their wives! Oh dear, this is very unfortunate! Oh dear, this complicates matters! Dear, dear, what will Her Majesty say?

GIA. 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 AL. That is the idea I intended to convey. (TESSA and GIANETTA begin to cry.)

GIU. (to TESSA). Tessa, my dear, dear child —

TESSA. Get away! perhaps it's you!

MAR. (to GIA.). My poor, poor little woman!

GIA. 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 AL. 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 AL. 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.

GIU. Poor old girl. Hadn't you better go and put her out of her suspense?

DON AL. 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.)

**END** —