

SCENE 1

A New York street ca. 1900-1910. There is a street musician with a violin who plays and a choir of carolers sing "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen".

As the music fades, Jim hurries down the street and enters his humble flat. Simple Christmas decorations brighten the room. A nativity scene on the mantel depicts the Magi offering their gifts to the Christ child. Della is sitting at a small table sewing a vest.

JIM I'm back with the chops, Della: our Christmas feast is prepared!

DELLA Hmm. Well then, it's like every dinner is Christmas dinner 'round here, isn't it?

JIM Ha ha. [as in, "Very funny". *He deposits the chops and removes his coat*] Come over here for a moment, Jim.

She is just finishing sewing and lifts up the vest. She helps him on with it in front of a small mirror.

O, you look dandy, Jim, really you do. Quite presentable.

JIM You're a wonder, Dell', a true wonder. How I ever kept myself properly clothed before I you came along I'll never know.

DELLA *Well*, the future Dr. James Dillingham Young, renowned physician, philanthropist, and pillar of the City of New York cannot be seen dragging around town dressed like a common chimney sweep, now can he?

JIM Hmm. [mimicking her 'Well'] *Well*, before I start giving away my millions to local charities, I'd better finish medical school first, don't you think?

DELLA [she waves it off] Hmff! Details.

JIM Perhaps, but I would have trouble giving a beggar change for a doughnut these days. [serious now] Can't even buy my sweetheart a proper present, and tomorrow Christmas, our first Christmas together as husband and wife. [he sits backwards on one of the chairs, facing away from her] Perhaps we were wrong, Dell'. If we'd waited you would still be living in a fine house, enjoying everything money could buy, as you deserve.

She comes up close behind him and puts her chin on his shoulders, both hands on his arms. They remain thus a moment. She brightens.

DELLA Look, Jim, I've fixed the pocket. You won't have to worry about your watch falling out any longer. [she runs to the dresser and fetches a fine looking pocket watch; they both admire it a moment]

JIM It is a beauty, isn't it? Belonged to my father and his father before him. At least we have one thing worth owning around here, I guess.

DELLA [*she puts it in the pocket*] Here you are, a time-piece fit for the finest physician. [*her 'f's' were a little exaggerated; he wipes his eye as though she has spit in it*] Beast! I don't know why I bother, sometimes.

JIM [*he grabs her*] 'Cause you're so in love.

DELLA [*quietly*] Oh yes. That's right. [*she kisses him tenderly, sighs*] Don't you worry about what money can or can't buy, my darling. Money can't buy this-- can't buy love. I should know.

JIM I don't deserve such a jewel.

DELLA Now you're talking sense. [*he snatches the pin holding her hair in place; It falls down her back*] Oh! [*he laughs as she quickly replaces the hair, looking in the mirror*] See? There, you just proved it.

JIM Oh well. It was worth risking the Dellian wrath to see that hair of yours fall down around your body. [*he is standing behind her and gently strokes her hair a moment*] I think I was mistaken just now. We have two great possessions in this household.

DELLA [*she giggles*] Dr. Young of the silver tongue!

JIM Sure you're not bothered that we can't celebrate in style this year?

DELLA Who says we can't?

JIM My friend, Martin Theodore Pockets, that's who.

DELLA Martin Theodore? Never heard of him.

JIM Well, he comes with me wherever I go. Call him MT for short: MT Pockets. Look here. [*he speaks to his trouser pocket*] Say, MT, what are the chances of our having a few presents under the tree tomorrow. [*he wiggles the edge of his pocket to make it "talk"*] **"Somewhere between poor and miserable"**. Maybe a nice fat turkey? **"Fraid not. It's chops again for the Youngs"** You're a real party pooper, aren't you Pockets? **"Well, it's only 'cause I don't get fed but once a week, and then it's pretty meager fare!"**

DELLA Well, Mr. Pockets, where there's a will there's a way.

JIM **"Say Jim, that's some girl. Bright, charming and cute as a... a button, I'd say."** Yes, well, you stick with the buttons, Pockets, and leave the girl to me.

[she laughs as the music starts]

DELLA I believe it, Jim. We'll have a fine Christmas after all, you'll see.

Don't you worry,
Here we two will take our pleasure.
You're my treasure
Just as you are.

[she examines her wedding ring]

Here's my safety:
With this ring I feel protected
Feel connected
Whether near or far.

Buy me a palace
Or golden dove:
I'd be poorer
If I lost your love.

JIM
Lovely Della,
Can you know how I adore you
I implore you
Stay as you are.
Hold me, love me,
Feel my glowing ardor shimmer
Feel it glimmer
Like the morning star.

Make me a doctor
Of worldly fame:
I'd feel humble
Whisp'ring Della's name.

DELLA
I don't care if you never have fame
I love your name.

While the world wanders
I've found the path of my life.

JIM
Let the world wander
I've found the loveliest wife.

DELLA
Here's my treasure.

JIM Here's my happiness.

DELLA Here's my pleasure.

JIM Here in our little nest.

DELLA Surely I've never been richer than now.

JIM Never was freer than after our vow.

BOTH Richer or poorer
 Of one thing I'm sure:

DELLA Our covenant of love
 Is eternal, beyond time.

JIM Our covenant of love will endure,
 I will love you,
 For you are my treasure,
 My Della mine.

DELLA You are my treasure,
 are mine.

Jim leaves. Della goes to the mantel and takes out a small bag and empties it onto the table. She quickly counts it up. She's on the verge of tears.

DELLA Oh! Scraping and saving six months and all I have to show is a paltry dollar and eighty-seven cents! I won't be able to find anything decent for a dollar eighty-seven.

She walks to the mirror and lets her hair fall down below her waist. After a moment she whirls away from the mirror, doing her hair back up.

Oh, I hope you don't kill me, boy!

She quickly grabs her hat and coat and goes out the door.