

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

Alternate version

1/2020

In 1937, Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman, the authors of *You Can't Take It With You*, wrote the characters of Rheba and Donald to be played by black actors as black characters. It was extremely rare back then for African American characters to appear on-stage in a comedy and practically unheard of for African Americans to be so enthusiastically embraced by a white family. One might say Hart and Kaufman were progressive for their times and, indeed, both men were thoughtful advocates against intolerance in their day.

Times change, however, and the Hart and Kaufman estates are aware that sensibilities change as well. We have decided to offer an alternate version of *You Can't Take It With You* that permits *all* the characters, including Donald and Rheba, to be played by a diverse cast of actors of all backgrounds, without any particular accent, affect, or patois. Since inclusiveness is the essence of the extended Vanderhof family—and the play itself—this alternate version seems very much in keeping with the spirit of the play. This alternate version is officially sanctioned by the Hart and Kaufman estates and it is requested that no further alterations be made to this version.

Of course, the original version of the play is pretty good, too, and that can and should also be produced, if it's appropriate for the venue.

The changes to the original script have been made using the Dramatists Play Service licensed script and all page numbers refer to that script and its page numbers. Unless otherwise noted, the original dialogue remains unchanged:

Page 6:

(From the kitchen comes RHEBA, a woman somewhere in the thirties. SHE works for the Sycamores as the cook/housekeeper. SHE carries eight napkins.)

Cut "Miss" (just "Essie" when it appears); Cut the "Miss" on "Miss Alice."

Page 9:

RHEBA *(starts to go)*: You bet.

Page 11:

PENNY: They're awfully cute, Rheba and Donald. Sort of like Blondie and Dagwood.

Page 11:

(RHEBA having opened the door; her gentleman, DONALD, looms up in the doorway.)

Page 11:

DONALD: No-o. I don't really get out much. I'm on government relief.

Page 12:

PAUL: Sure! And the Czar, and the Cossacks!

DONALD: And the parting of the Red Sea?

PAUL: No, no, Donald—

Page 13:

DONALD: You want to hear some funny speeches you listen to one of FDR's Fireside Chats.

GRANDPA: I'm sure one day, they'll have him at Columbia, too.

Page 13:

DONALD: Sure thing. Rheba, Grandpa's home. . . . we can have dinner.

Page 23:

TONY: (Working away with the opener.) Of course, why they make these bottles for garden gnomes I never did...(As bottle opens) All over my coat.

Page 32:

DONALD: Rheba kind of fancied some candy, and—(*His gaze is roaming the room.*) oh, there it is. (*He picks up Penny's skull, if you know what we mean.*) You folks don't want it, do you?

Page 36:

(*RHEBA, who has entered just in time to overhear this, throws GAY an angry look, bangs a glass on her tray and exits, U.R.*)

Page 42:

RHEBA (*delighted as usual*): Well, hel-lo, Mr. Kolenkhov!

Page 42:

RHEBA: No, sir! I couldn't do that, Mr. Kolenkhov! I've got hammer toes!

Page 43:

DONALD: Yes, sir, it's fine. Only thing is you got to go around to the place every week and collect it, and sometimes you got to stand in line for pretty near half an hour. Government ought to be run better than that—don't you think, Grandpa?

Page 53:

DONALD:

Yes, ma'am. Only they didn't have any frankfurters, so I got pickled pig's feet. (Exits U.R.)

Page 56:

RHEBA: (*in a loud whisper*) Alice! Alice!

(*ALICE quickly flies to RHEBA's side.*)

The eggs fell down the sink.

ALICE (*Desperately*): Make some more! Quick!

RHEBA: They're ain't any.

Page 64:

RHEBA: Nope, and it's too bad, too. Alice sure loves that boy.

(*She sighs heartily.*)

I don't know what I'm going to do with all that food out in the kitchen. Not going to be a party tonight, that's for sure.

Page 64:

RHEBA: Well, not *them*. They're all so broken up about Alice.

Cut "Miss" in next speech.

Page 65

DONALD: How do *you* feel, Mrs. Sycamore?