

# YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

## Alternate Version

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 onstage 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 time, 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 and is officially sanctioned by the Hart and Kaufman estates. 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.

## Script Changes

Changes to the original text have been made using the Dramatists Play Service script. All page numbers refer to that version. Unless otherwise noted, the original dialogue remains unchanged:

GLOBAL: Cut “Miss” in “Miss Essie” and “Miss Alice” when Rheba refers to them as such. (Just “Essie” and “Alice” when they appear.)  
p. 9: (*From the kitchen comes Rheba, a woman somewhere in her thirties. She works for the Sycamores as the cook/housekeeper. She carries eight napkins.*)

- p. 12: RHEBA. (*Starts to go.*) You bet.
- p. 14: PENNY. They're awfully cute, Rheba and Donald. Sort of like Blondie and Dagwood.
- p. 14: (*Rheba having opened the door; her gentleman, Donald, looms in the doorway.*)
- p. 14: DONALD. No-o. I don't really get out much. I'm on government relief.
- p. 15: PAUL. Sure! And the Czar, and the Cossacks! DONALD. And the parting of the Red Sea? PAUL. No, no, Donald—
- p. 16: 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.
- p. 16: DONALD. Sure thing. (*As he exits through kitchen door U. R.*) Rheba, Grandpa's home... we can have dinner.
- p. 30: 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.
- p. 35: 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?
- p. 39: (*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.*)
- p. 45: RHEBA. (*Delighted, as usual.*) Well, hel-lo, Mr. Kolenkhov!
- p. 45: RHEBA. No, sir! I couldn't do that, Mr. Kolenkhov! I've got hammer toes!
- p. 46: DONALD. Yes, sir, it's fine. (*Starts to go R.*) 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?
- p. 56: DONALD. Yes, ma'am. Only they didn't have any frankfurters, so I got pickled pig's feet. (*Exits U. R.*)
- p. 58: 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.

p. 67: 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.

p. 68: RHEBA. Well, not them. They're all so broken up about Alice.

p. 68: DONALD. How do *you* feel, Mrs. Sycamore