

## PLOT

*You Can't Take It With You* is a comedy by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, which first appeared on Broadway in 1936 and became an instant hit.

Set on the Upper Westside of New York City, the play depicts the clash between a wildly eccentric, free-spirited family (the Vanderhof/Sycamores) and a conventional, wealthy family (the Kirbys) when the Sycamore's daughter, Alice, becomes engaged to the Kirby's son, Tony.

There are many humorous situations as the Kirbys are exposed to the Vanderhof's unconventional lifestyle; highlighting the absurdity of societal expectations and the importance of living life on one's own terms, even if it means embracing chaos and unconventional pursuits.

## CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

**Penelope Sycamore:** Usually goes by Penny, Penelope is the mother of Essie and Alice, wife of Paul, and daughter of Martin. She writes plays and paints as hobbies because it makes her happy but is terrible at both. Penny is a loving mother and wife who is constantly concerned with the welfare of her family. Her main goal is to make sure everyone is happy, particularly her daughter Alice.

**Essie Carmichael:** Wife of Ed, daughter of Penny and Paul Sycamore, Granddaughter of Martin, sister of Alice. She is childlike. As a hobby she makes candy that Ed sells. Essie dreams of being a ballerina. She has spent 8 years studying with Boris Kolenkhov but is a terrible dancer.

**Rheba:** The housekeeper and cook to the Sycamore family. She is treated almost like a part of the family. She is dating Donald. In the words of Mrs. Sycamore, "The two of them are really cute together."

**Paul Sycamore:** Father of Essie and Alice, husband of Penny, son-in-law of Martin. He is a tinkerer who manufactures fireworks in the basement with the help of his assistant Mr. De Pinna. His hobby is playing with erector sets.

**Mr. De Pinna:** The ice man who came inside to speak to Paul eight years before, and never left. He helps Mr. Sycamore build fireworks and moonlights as a model in Mrs. Sycamore's paintings.

**Ed Carmichael:** Husband of Essie, son-in-law of Paul and Penny. He is a xylophone player and distributes Essie's candies. Ed is an amateur printer who prints anything that sounds 'catchy' to him. He prints up dinner menus for his family and communist pamphlets that he places in the boxes of Essie's candy. He also likes to make masks.

**Donald Curry:** The boyfriend of Rheba, who seems to serve as volunteer handyman for the Sycamores.

**Martin Vanderhof:** Referred to mostly as Grandpa in the play. Father-in-law to Paul, father of Penny, grandfather of Alice and Essie. He is an eccentric happy old man who has never paid his income tax because he doesn't believe in it, as he feels that the government wouldn't know what to do with the money if he paid it. Once a very successful businessman, he left his job 35 years prior for no reason other than to just relax. He lives his life by the philosophy "don't do anything that you're not going to enjoy doing". He goes to circuses, commencements, throws darts, and collects stamps.

**Alice Sycamore:** Fiancée of Tony Kirby, daughter of Paul and Penny, granddaughter of Martin, sister of Essie. She is the only "normal" member of the extended family. She has an office job and is rather embarrassed by the eccentricities of her family when she has Tony and his parents at her house, yet she still loves them. She tends to be a pessimist.

**Wilbur C. Henderson:** An employee of the IRS (Internal Revenue Service). He comes to collect the tax money owed by Grandpa and can't understand why he won't pay income tax.

**Tony Kirby:** Fiancé of Alice, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kirby. He sees how, even though the Sycamores appear odd, they are really the perfect family because they love and care about each other. His own family is very proper and has many issues none of them will admit. He is vice president of Kirby and Co.

**Boris Kolenkhov:** A Russian who escaped to America shortly before the Russian Revolution. He is very concerned with world politics, and the deterioration of Russia. He is the ballet instructor of Essie, aware that she is untalented at dancing, but knows that she enjoys dancing, so he keeps working with her. He admires the ancient Greeks and the Romans, questions society, and is interested in world affairs.

**Gay Wellington:** An actress whom Mrs. Sycamore meets on a bus and invites home to read one of her plays. She is an alcoholic, gets very drunk, and passes out shortly after arriving at the Sycamore's home.

**Anthony W. Kirby:** Husband of Mrs. Kirby, father of Tony. He is a very proper man who is president of Kirby and Co. and secretly despises his job. His hobby is raising expensive orchids. He is also a member of the Harvard Society, the Union Club, the National Geographic Society, and the Racquet Club.

**Miriam Kirby:** Wife of Mr. Kirby, mother of Tony. She is an extremely prim and proper woman and is horrified by the goings-on in the Sycamore household. Her hobby is spiritualism.

**G-Man 1 (The Man), G-Man 2 (Jim), G-Man 3 (Mac):** Three agents who come to investigate Ed because of the communist origin of some of the 'catchy' quotes he printed and placed in Essie's candy boxes, such as "*God is the State – the State is God*" and "*Dynamite the White House*".

**The Grand Duchess Olga Katrina:** She was one of the Grand Duchesses of Russia before the Revolution, another being her sister, the Grand Duchess Natasha. Since then she has been forced to flee to America where she has found work as a waitress in Childs Restaurant. The rest of her family has had a similar fate, such as her Uncle Sergei, the Grand Duke, who is now an elevator operator. She loves to cook as a hobby.