

~~HOWIE. (Kneeling, hands near two corners, *see* *you on doorstep*) Yes'm—and two-a-cream.~~

~~MRS. WEBB. (Looking up.) Will it start raining again, Howie?~~

~~HOWIE. (Looking up) Well— I was just sayin' to M's Gibbs as how it may clear up. (Rises, takes rack, starts up C. and off R.) Mrs. Newsome told me special to tell you as how we hope they'll be happy, M's Webb,—know they will.~~

~~MRS. WEBB. (Calling after him) Thank you, and thank Mrs. Newsome; and we're counting on seeing you at the church.~~

~~HOWIE. Yes, M's Webb. We hope to get there all right. Couldn't miss that. Come on, Bessie!~~

~~(MRS. WEBB takes two bottles to table above stove, returns for four more. MRS. GIBBS near stove stops to clear away.)~~

DR. GIBBS. (Enters downstairs R. to R. of table. Trying to be cheerful) Well, Ma, the day has come. You're losing one of your chicks.

MRS. GIBBS. (Covering up tears) Frank Gibbs, don't you say another word. I feel like cryin' every minute. (Xes to pour coffee at table for him) Sit down and drink your coffee. (MRS. WEBB peels and slices potatoes at table above stove.)

DR. GIBBS. (Sits R. of table, tucks napkin into neck, puts sugar in coffee) The groom's up shaving himself, only there ain't an awful lot to shave— (MRS. GIBBS sets pot on stove and Xes to cupboard for silver) whistling and singing like he's glad to leave us.— Every now and then he says "I do" to the mirror, but it don't sound convincing to me. (Blows coffee and drinks)

MRS. GIBBS. (Xing to table to set places for self and REBECCA) I declare, Frank, I don't know how he'll get along. I've arranged his clothes, and seen to it his feet are dry and he's got warm things on—

they're too young, Frank. Emily won't think of such things. He'll catch his death-a-cold within a week.

DR. GIBBS. I remember my wedding morning, Julia.

MRS. GIBBS. (Xing to stove to turn french toast) Now don't start that, Frank Gibbs.

DR. GIBBS. (Smiling) I was the scarest young fella in the state of New Hampshire. I thought I'd made a mistake for sure. (MRS. GIBBS Xes to cupboard to pour milk) When I saw you coming down that aisle I thought you were the prettiest girl I'd ever seen; but the only trouble was that I'd never seen you before. There I was in the Congregational Church marryin' a total stranger! (MRS. WEBB puts potatoes on stage to German-fry. Then sets table from cupboard in three trips.)

MRS. GIBBS. (Xing to table with milk for REBECCA) And how do you think I felt? (Xing to above to serve his toast) Frank, weddings are perfectly awful things. Farces,—that's what they are! (Xing to table to set plate before him) Here, I've made something for you.

DR. GIBBS. Why, Julia Hersey! French toast!

MRS. GIBBS. (Pleased) 'Tain't hard to make and I had to do something. (Turns suddenly serious and Xes to stove, serves self.)

DR. GIBBS. (Pause. DR. GIBBS pours syrup round and round four times, then:) How'd you sleep last night, Julia? (Eats)

MRS. GIBBS. (Xing to sit above table with own plate and coffee) Well, I heard a lot of the hours struck off. (Takes sugar and cream)

DR. GIBBS. (Thoughtfully, facing half out) Aya, I get a shock every time I think of George setting out to be a family man—that great gangling thing! I tell you, Julia, there's nothing so terrifying in the world as a son. The relation of father and son is the damndest, awkwardest—

MRS. GIBBS. (*Stirs coffee*) Well, mother and daughter's no picnic, let me tell you— (*Drinks*)

DR. GIBBS. They'll have a lot of troubles, I suppose, but that's none of our business. Everybody has a right to their own troubles. (*MRS. WEBB faces up, washes dishes*)

MRS. GIBBS. (*Drinking coffee, reminiscent*) Aya—people are meant to live two-by-two in this world. 'Tain't natural to be lonesome. (*Cuts toast*)

DR. GIBBS. (*After a slight pause; laughing*) Julia, do you know one of the things I was scared of when I married you?

MRS. GIBBS. Oh, go along with you! (*Eats*)

DR. GIBBS. I was afraid we didn't have material for conversation more'n'd last us a few weeks. (*BOTH laugh heartily*) I was afraid we'd run out and eat our meals in silence, that's a fact. Well, you and I been conversing for twenty years now without any noticeable barren spells. (*Eats*) (*MRS. WEBB dries hands on towel, starts to weep.*)

MRS. GIBBS. Well, good weather, bad weather, 'tain't very choice, but I always find something to say. Did you hear Rebecca stirrin' around upstairs? (*Rises, taking both plates. Xes to sink to scrape plates*) (*MRS. WEBB Xes to sit above table, facing L., covers apron*)

DR. GIBBS. No. Only day of the year Rebecca hasn't been managing everybody's business up there. She's hiding in her room. I got the idea she's crying.

MRS. GIBBS. (*Xing two steps R.*) Lord's sakes—this has got to stop. Rebecca! Rebecca! Come and get your breakfast.

(*DR. GIBBS wipes mouth with napkin*)

~~GEORGE. (*Runs down stairs R. Cheerily, Xing to stop Father's back*) Good morning, everybody.~~

~~Only four more hours to that (*Georges cutting throat with "K-k-k-z-z"* sound. Xes into trellis down R. GIBBS looks annoyed at sound.)~~

~~MRS. GIBBS. (*Xing to half to table*) George Gibbs, where are you going?~~

~~GEORGE. (*Stepping back into room*) Just stepping across the grass to see my girl. (*DR. GIBBS folds napkin*)~~

~~MRS. GIBBS. Now, George, you put on your rubbers. It's raining torrents. You don't go out of this house without you're prepared for it (*DR. GIBBS rises, Xes to stairs, stops*)~~

~~GEORGE. Aw, Ma—it's just a step.~~

~~MRS. GIBBS. George. (*Takes dog's plate and cup to sink, scrapes plate*) You'll catch your death-a-cold and cough all through the service. (*GEORGE starts doggedly out trellis*)~~

~~DR. GIBBS. George, do as your mother tells you! (*Exits upstairs*) (*GEORGE droops, Xes to sit on steps, puts on rubbers*)~~

~~MRS. GIBBS. (*To cupboard for cup, sets it on table*) From tomorrow on you can kill yourself in all weathers, but while you're in my house you'll live wisely, thank you. (*Xing to stove for pot, starts to table with it*) Perhaps Mrs. Webb isn't used to callers at seven in the morning. (*GEORGE rises, Xes into trellis*) Here, take a cup of coffee first!~~

~~GEORGE. (*Gaily*) 'Be back in a minute. (*Runs, jumping puddles to down L. and through trellis*)~~

~~(*MRS. GIBBS shakes head in annoyance, takes cup, pours coffee back in pot on stove, exits upstairs.*)~~

~~GEORGE. (*Xing in above to R. of her, cheerily*) Good morning, Mother Webb.~~

~~Mrs. Webb. Good morning, George.~~