

*mrs. w* You frightened me! (*Rises, turns to him*) Now, George—I hate to say it—you can stand here a minute out of the rain—but really—you understand, George, I can't ask you in.

GEORGE. Why not—?

MRS. WEBB. Why, George, you know's well as I do—the groom can't see his bride on his wedding day, not until he sees her in church.

(*MR. WEBB starts downstairs*)

GEORGE. Aw,—that's just a superstition. Good morning, Mr. Webb.

*mr.* MRS. WEBB. Good morning, George. (*Xes to stove for coffee pot, takes it to up L. of table*)

GEORGE. (*Laughing*) Mr. Webb, you don't believe in that superstition, do you?

MR. WEBB. There's a lot of common-sense in superstitions, George. (*Sits L. of table*)

MRS. WEBB. (*Pouring coffee for him*) Millions have folla'd it, George, and don't you be the first to fly in the face of custom. (*Xes to replace pot on stove*)

(*MR. WEBB takes four spoons of sugar*)

GEORGE. How is Emily?

MRS. WEBB. She hasn't waked up yet. I haven't heard a sound out of her. (*Pouring coffee at stove*)

GEORGE. Emily's asleep!!

MRS. WEBB. No wonder! We were up til' all hours sewing and packing. (*Sets cup for GEORGE*) Now, I'll tell you what I'll do, George; you set down here a minute with Mr. Webb and drink this cup of coffee; (*Xing to stairs*) and I'll run upstairs and see she don't come down and surprise you. There's some bacon, too. (*Going upstairs*) But don't be long about it.

(*Long pause. GEORGE sits above table, uses sugar, stirs, steals look at MR. WEBB. WEBB, facing half out, embarrassed, dunks doughnut and eats ravenously*)

MR. WEBB. Well, George, how are you?

GEORGE. (*About to drink, sets cup down*) I'm fine. (*Pause. Earnestly*) Mr. Webb, what common-sense could there be in a superstition like that?

MR. WEBB. (*Still half out*) Well, George—the wedding morning a girl's head's full of—oh, you know—clothes and—one thing and another. Don't you think that's probably it? (*Dunks and eats*)

GEORGE. I—uh—yes. I never thought of that.

MR. WEBB. A girl's apt to be a mite nervous on her wedding day.

GEORGE. (*Stirring coffee*) Gee, I wish a person could get married without all that marching up and down.

MR. WEBB. Every man that's ever lived has felt that way, George, but it hasn't been any use. It's the women-folk who've built up weddings, my boy. For a while now the women have it all their own. (*Drinks from saucer*) A man looks pretty small at a wedding, George. All those good women standing shoulder to shoulder, making sure that the knot's tied in a mighty public way. (*Cuts food and eats*)

GEORGE. (*Earnestly*) Well, you believe in it, don't you, Mr. Webb?

MR. WEBB. (*Quietly*) Yes. (*With alacrity, suddenly looking at GEORGE*) Oh, yes! Now, don't misunderstand me, George. Marriage is a wonderful thing. A wonderful thing. Don't you forget that, George.

GEORGE. No, sir. (*Pause*) Mr. Webb, how old were you when you got married?

MR. WEBB. Well, you see—I'd been to college

and I'd taken a little time to get settled. But Mrs. Webb, she wasn't much older than what Emily is. (*Stirring coffee*) Oh, age hasn't got much to do with it, George, compared with—other things. (*Drinks*)

GEORGE. What were you going to say, Mr. Webb?

MR. WEBB. I don't know. Was I going to say something? (*GEORGE is confused*) (*Pause*) (*MR. WEBB sits back, crosses knees, folds arms—*) George, I was remembering the other night the advice my father gave me when I got married. Yes, he said: "Charles," he said: "start right off showin' who's boss. Best thing to do is to give an order about something, even if it don't make sense, just so she'll learn to obey," he said. (*GEORGE is more perplexed, looks out throughout*) Then he said: "If anything about her irritates you, her conversation or anything, get right up and leave the house; that'll make it clear to her." And, oh, yes, he said: "Never let your wife know about how much money you have, never."

GEORGE. (*Frightened and flabbergasted*) Well, I couldn't exactly—

MR. WEBB. So I took the opposite of his advice and I've been happy ever since. (*GEORGE rests chin on L. hand, completely puzzled. MR. WEBB smiles at his confusion. He has obviously invented the story*) So let that be a lesson to you never to ask advice of anybody on personal matters (*Faces him*) George, are you going to raise chickens on your farm?

GEORGE. What?

MR. WEBB. Are you raising chickens on your farm?

GEORGE. (*Hitches chair a bit nearer, enthusiastic*) Yes, Uncle Luke has never gone in for chickens much—but I been figuring on readin' up—

MR. WEBB. George, a book came into my office on the Philo System of raising chickens. I wish

you'd read it. I'm thinking of beginning in a small way myself, in the back yard! I'm going to put an incubator in the cellar—

MRS. WEBB. (*Enters downstairs. Xes to above MR. WEBB*) Charles Webb, are you talking about that incubator again? I thought you two'd be talking about things worth while!

MR. WEBB. (*Firm and sarcastic*) Well, Myrtle, if you want to give the boy some good advice, I'll go upstairs.

MRS. WEBB. (*Pulls GEORGE up and forces him out through trellis*) George, Emily's got to come down and eat her breakfast! She sends you her love, but she doesn't want to lay her eyes on you. Good-bye.

GEORGE. (*More perplexed than ever*) Goodbye. (*GEORGE Xes slowly home, avoiding a puddle C., and upstairs, MRS. WEBB stands above trellis watching*)

MR. WEBB. (*Rise*) Myrtle, guess you didn't know about that older superstition.

MRS. WEBB. What do you mean, Charles?

MR. WEBB. (*Wagging his finger*) Since the cave-man. No bridegroom should see his father-in-law on the day of the wedding, or near it. (*Exit upstairs*) Now remember that. (*MRS. WEBB, eyes following him in surprise, exits behind tormentor*)

~~STACE MARRIAGE. (*Entering down R., King C.*) Thank you very much, Mr. and Mrs. Webb. Now I have to interrupt again here. You see, we want to know how all this began—this wedding, this plan to spend a life-time together. I'm awfully interested in how big things like that begin. You know how it is: you're twenty-one or twenty-two any you make some decisions; then whisssh! you're seventy, you've been a lawyer for fifty years, and that white-haired lady by your side has eaten over fifty thousand meals with you. How do such things~~