

And Mrs. Soames who enjoyed the wedding so – you remember? Oh, and a lot of others. And Editor Webb's boy, Wallace, whose appendix burst while he was on a Boy Scout trip to Crawford Notch. Yes, an awful lot of sorrow has sort of quieted down up here. People just wild with grief have brought their relatives up to this hill. We all know how it is...and then time...and sunny days...and rainy days... 'n snow... We're all glad they're in a beautiful place and we're coming up here ourselves when our fit's over. **Now there are some** things we all know, but we don't take 'em out and look at 'em very often. We all know that *something* is eternal. And it ain't houses and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even the stars... everybody knows in their bones that *something* is eternal, and that something has to do with human beings. All the greatest people ever lived have been telling us that for five thousand years and yet you'd be surprised how people are always losing hold of it. There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being. *(pause)* You know as well as I do that the dead don't stay interested in us living people for very long. Gradually, gradually, they lose hold of the earth... and the ambitions they had...and the pleasures they had...and the things they suffered...and the people they loved. They get weaned away from earth – that's the way I put it, – weaned away. And they stay here while the earth part of 'em burns away, burns out; and all that time they slowly get indifferent to what's goin' on in Grover's Corners. They're waitin'. They're waitin' for something that they feel is comin'. Something important, and great. Aren't they waitin' for the eternal part in them to come out clear? Some of the things they're going to say maybe'll hurt your feelings – but that's the way it is: mother 'n daughter...

husband 'n wife...enemy 'n enemy...money 'n miser...all those terribly important things kind of grow pale around here. And what's left when memory's gone, and your identity, Mrs. Smith?

(He looks at the audience a minute, then turns to the stage.)

(JOE STODDARD, 60-odd, enters, crossing to glance at a grave a moment, then turns downstage a bit and stands watching for mourners off left. He carries his hat. At the same time, SAM CRAIG, 30, enters, wiping his forehead from the exertion. He carries an umbrella and strolls front.)

STAGE MANAGER. *(front)* Well! There are some *living* people. There's Joe Stoddard, our undertaker, supervising a new-made grave. And here comes a Grover's Corners boy, that left town to go out West.

SAM CRAIG. Good afternoon, Joe Stoddard.

JOE STODDARD. *(turns, surprised)* Good afternoon, good afternoon. Let me see now: do I know you?

SAM CRAIG. I'm Sam Craig.

JOE STODDARD. Gracious sakes' alive! Of all people! I should'a knowed you'd be back for the funeral. You've been away a long time, Sam.

SAM CRAIG. Yes, I've been away over twelve years. I'm in business out in Buffalo now, Joe. But I was in the East when I got news of my cousin's death, so I thought I'd combine things a little and come and see the old home. You look well.

JOE STODDARD. Yes, yes, can't complain. Very sad, our journey today, Samuel.

SAM CRAIG. Yes.

JOE STODDARD. Yes, yes. I always say I hate to supervise when a young person is taken.