

## **ABBY, MARTHA , HARPER, BROPHY & KLEIN**

*It is late afternoon in September. As the curtain rises, ABBY BREWSTER, a plump little darling in her late sixties. At her left, in the comfortable armchair, is the REV. DR. HARPER, the elderly rector of the nearby church.*

ABBY: My sister Martha and I have been talking all week about your sermon last Sunday. It's really wonderful, Dr. Harper—in only two short years you've taken on the spirit of Brooklyn.

DR. HARPER: That's very gratifying, Miss Brewster.

ABBY: You see, living here next to the church all our lives, we've seen so many ministers come and go. The spirit of Brooklyn, we always say, is friendliness—and your sermons are not so much sermons as friendly talks. Have another cup of tea, Dr. Harper?

DR. HARPER: No, thank you. I must admit, Miss Abby, that unhappiness and violence seem far removed from these surroundings.

ABBY: It is peaceful here, isn't it?

DR. HARPER: Yes—peaceful. The virtues of another day—they're all here in this house. The gentle virtues that went out with candlelight and good manners and low taxes.

ABBY: *[Glancing about her contentedly]* It's one of the oldest houses in Brooklyn. It's just as it was when Grandfather Brewster built and furnished it—except for the electricity. We use it as little as possible—it was Mortimer who persuaded us to put it in.

DR. HARPER: *[Dryly]* Yes, I can understand that. Your nephew Mortimer seems to live only for bright lights.

ABBY: The poor boy has to work so late. I understand he's taking Elaine to the theater again tonight.

### **START**

ABBY: We're so happy Mortimer is taking Elaine to the theater with him.

DR. HARPER: Well, it's a new experience for me to wait up until three o'clock in the morning for my daughter to be brought home.

ABBY: Oh, Dr. Harper, I hope you don't disapprove of Mortimer.

DR. HARPER: Well ...

ABBY: We'd feel so guilty if you did—Sister Martha and I. I mean since it was here in our home that your daughter met Mortimer.

DR. HARPER: I must also admit that I have watched the growing intimacy between him and my daughter with some trepidation. For the reason, Miss Abby, of your nephew's unfortunate connection with the theater.

ABBY: The theater! Oh, no, Dr. Harper! Mortimer writes for a New York newspaper.

DR. HARPER: I know, I know. But a dramatic critic is constantly exposed to the theater, and I don't doubt that some of them develop an interest in it.

ABBY: Well, not Mortimer! You need have no fear at all. Why, Mortimer hates the theater.

DR. HARPER: Really?

ABBY: Oh, yes! He writes awful things about the theater. But you can't blame him, poor boy. He was so happy writing about real estate, which he really knew something about, and then they just made him take this terrible night position.

DR. HARPER: My! My!

ABBY: But as he says, the theater can't last much longer and in the meantime, it's a living. [*Complacently*] I think if we give the theater another year or two. . . . [*There is a knock. She goes to door and opens it*] Come right in, Mr. Brophy. [*Two uniformed policemen enter.* BROPHY *and* KLEIN]

BROPHY: [*To* ABBY] We've come for the toys for the Christmas Fund.

ABBY: Oh, yes! How is Mrs. Brophy today? Mrs. Brophy has been quite ill, Dr. Harper.

BROPHY: Oh, she's better now. A little weak still. . . .

ABBY: I'm going to get you some beef broth to take to her.

BROPHY: Don't bother, Miss Abby! You've done so much for her already.

ABBY: We made it this morning. Sister Martha is taking some to poor Mr. Benitzky right now. I won't be a minute. Sit down and be comfortable, all of you *[She goes into the kitchen]*

BROPHY: She shouldn't go to all that trouble.

DR. HARPER: When I moved next door, my wife wasn't well. And when she died—and for months before—well, if I know what pure kindness and absolute generosity are, it's because I've known the Brewster sisters.

MARTHA BREWSTER *enters.*

MARTHA *is also a plump, sweet, elderly woman with Victorian charm. She is dressed in the old-fashioned manner of* ABBY,

MARTHA: *[Closing the door]* Well, isn't this nice?

BROPHY: Good afternoon, Miss Brewster.

MARTHA: How do you do, Mr. Brophy?

DR. HARPER: Good afternoon, Miss Brewster.

MARTHA: How do you do, Dr. Harper, Mr. Klein?

KLEIN: How do you do, Miss Brewster? We dropped in to get the Christmas toys.

MARTHA: Oh, yes! They're all packed. I hope Mrs. Brophy's better?

BROPHY: She's doing fine, ma'am. Your sister's getting some soup for me to take to her.

MARTHA: Oh, yes, we made it this morning. I just took some to a poor man who broke ever so many bones.

ABBY: Oh, you're back, Martha. How was Mr. Benitzky?

MARTHA: It's pretty serious, I'm afraid. The doctor was there. He's going to amputate in the morning.

ABBY: *[Hopefully]* Can we be present?

MARTHA: No. I asked him, but he says it's against the rules of the hospital.

ABBY: Here's the broth, Mr. Brophy. *[She hands the pail to* BROPHY]

BROPHY: Thank you, Miss Brewster.

ABBY: Be sure it's good and hot.

KLEIN: *[hooking into the box of toys]* This is fine—it'll make a lot of kids happy. We'll run along now, ma'am, and thank you very much.

ABBY: *[Closing door]* Not at all. Good-by.

MARTHA: Good-by.

DR. HARPER: I must be getting home. **But...** Have you ever tried to persuade your Teddy that he wasn't Teddy Roosevelt?

ABBY: Oh, no!

MARTHA: He's so happy being Teddy Roosevelt.

ABBY: And we'd so much rather he'd be Mr. Roosevelt than nobody.

DR. HARPER: Well, if he's happy **Ah...** I'd better be running along. *[He leaves]*

ABBY: *[At door; calling after him]* Please don't think harshly of Mortimer because he's a dramatic critic. **Somebody** has to do those things.