

Mrs. Newsome told me to tell you as how we hope they'll both be very happy, Mrs. Webb. Know they *will*.

MRS. WEBB. (*calling after him*) Thank you, and thank Mrs. Newsome and we're counting on seeing you at the wedding.

HOWIE NEWSOME. Yes, Mrs. Webb. We hope to git there. Couldn't miss that. Come on, Bessie.

(**HOWIE NEWSOME** *exits.*)

(**MRS. WEBB** *takes two bottles to table above stove; returns for four more. MRS. GIBBS* *near stove stops to blow nose, on verge of tears.*)

(**DR. GIBBS** *descends in shirt sleeves, trying to be cheerful.*)

DR. GIBBS. Well, Ma, the day has come. You're losin' one of your chicks.

MRS. GIBBS. Frank Gibbs, don't you say another word. I feel like crying every minute. (*crosses to pour coffee at the table for him*) Sit down and drink your coffee.

(**MRS. WEBB** *peels and slices potatoes at table above stove.*)

DR. GIBBS. (*sits down at his breakfast 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 crosses 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. (*crossing to table to set places for herself and Rebecca*) I declare, Frank, I don't know how he'll get along. I've arranged his clothes and seen to

it he's put warm things on – Frank! They're too young. Emily won't think of such things. He'll catch his death of cold within a week.

DR. GIBBS. I was remembering my wedding morning, Julia.

MRS. GIBBS. (*crossing to stove to turn French toast*) Now don't start that, Frank Gibbs.

DR. GIBBS. (*smiling*) I was the scariest young fella in the State of New Hampshire. I thought I'd make a mistake for sure.

(**MRS. GIBBS** *crosses to the cupboard to pour milk.*)

And when I saw you comin' 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** *sets table from cupboard in three trips.*)

MRS. GIBBS. (*crossing to table with milk for Rebecca*) And how do you think I felt! (*serves his toast*) – Frank, weddings are perfectly awful things. Farces, – that's what they are!

(*She puts a 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, crosses to stove and serves self*)

(*Pause. DR. GIBBS pours on the syrup, round and round four times, then:*)

DR. GIBBS. How'd you sleep last night, Julia? (*eats*)

MRS. GIBBS. (*crossing to sit at table with own plate and coffee*) Well, I heard a lot of the hours struck off. (*takes sugar and cream*)

DR. GIBBS. (*thoughtfully*) Ye-e-s! 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 darndest, 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** *washes dishes.*)

MRS. GIBBS. (*at the table, drinking her coffee, meditatively*) Yes...people are meant to go through life two by two. 'Tain't natural to be lonesome. (*cuts toast*)

(*Pause. DR. GIBBS starts laughing.*)

DR. GIBBS. 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 wouldn't have material for conversation more'n'd last us a few weeks.

(*Both laugh.*)

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.*)

MRS. GIBBS. Well, – good weather, bad weather – 'tain't very choice, but I always find something to say. Did you hear Rebecca stirring around upstairs? (*Rises, taking both plates. Crosses to sink to scrape plates.*)

(**MRS. WEBB** *crosses to sit at table, covers apron.*)

DR. GIBBS. No. Only day of the year Rebecca hasn't been managing every-body's business up there.

She's hiding in her room. – I got the impression she's crying.

MRS. GIBBS. Lord's sakes! – This has got to stop. – Rebecca! Rebecca! Come and get your breakfast.

(DR. GIBBS *wipes his mouth with napkin.*)

(GEORGE *comes rattling down the stairs, very brisk.*)

GEORGE. Good morning, everybody. Only five more hours to live. (*He makes the gesture of cutting his throat, and a loud "k-k-k", and starts through the trellis.*)

MRS. GIBBS. George Gibbs, where are you going?

GEORGE. (*stepping back into room*) Just stepping across the grass to see my girl.

MRS. GIBBS. Now, George! You put on your overshoes. It's raining torrents. You don't go out of this house without you're prepared for it.

(DR. GIBBS *rises, crosses to stairs, stops.*)

GEORGE. Aw, Ma. It's just a *step!*

MRS. GIBBS. George! You'll catch your death of cold and cough all through the service.

DR. GIBBS. George, do as your mother tells you!

(DR. GIBBS *goes upstairs.*)

(GEORGE *returns reluctantly to the kitchen and pantomimes putting on overshoes.*)

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. (*crossing to stove for pot, starts to table with it*) – Maybe Mrs. Webb isn't used to callers at seven in the morning.

(GEORGE *rises, crosses into trellis.*)

MRS. GIBBS. (*cont.*) – Here, take a cup of coffee first.

GEORGE. Be back in a minute.