

with Mr. Webb and drink this cup of coffee; (*crossing to stairs*) and I'll go upstairs and see she doesn't come down and surprise you. There's some bacon, too; but don't be long about it.

(*Exit MRS. WEBB.*)

(*Embarrassed silence. GEORGE sits at table, uses sugar, stirs, steals look at MR. WEBB.*)

(*MR. WEBB dunks doughnuts in his coffee.*)

(*more silence*)

**MR. WEBB.** (*suddenly and loudly*) Well, George, how are you?

**GEORGE.** (*startled, choking over his coffee*) Oh, fine, I'm fine. (*Pause. Earnestly.*) Mr. Webb, what sense could there be in a superstition like that?

**MR. WEBB.** Well, you see – on her wedding morning a girl's head's apt to be full of...clothes and one thing and another. Don't you think that's probably it? (*dunks and eats*)

**GEORGE.** Ye-e-s. I never thought of that.

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

**GEORGE.** (*stirring coffee*) I wish a fellow could get married without all that marching up and down.

**MR. WEBB.** Every man that's ever lived has felt that way about it, George; but it hasn't been any use. It's the womenfolk who've built up weddings, my boy. For a while now the women have it all their own. 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.** But...you *believe* in it, don't you, Mr. Webb?

**MR. WEBB.** (*With alacrity. Suddenly looking at GEORGE.*) Oh, yes; *oh, yes*. Don't you misunderstand me, my boy. Marriage is a wonderful thing, – wonderful thing. And 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 much to do with it, George – not compared with...uh...other things. *(drinks)*

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

MR. WEBB. Oh, I don't know. – Was I going to say something? *(pause)* George, I was thinking the other night of some advice my father gave me when I got married. Charles, he said, Charles, start out early showing who's boss, he said. Best thing to do is to give an order, even if it don't make sense; just so she'll learn to obey. And he said: if anything about your wife irritates you – her conversation, or anything – just get up and leave the house. That'll make it clear to her, he said. And, oh, yes! he said never, *never* let your wife know how much money you have, never.

GEORGE. Well, Mr. Webb...I don't think I could...

MR. WEBB. So I took the opposite of my father's advice and I've been happy ever since. And let that be a lesson to you, George, never to ask advice on personal matters. – George, are you going to raise chickens on your farm?

GEORGE. What?

MR. WEBB. Are you going to raise chickens on your farm?

GEORGE. *(hitches chair nearer, enthusiastic)* Uncle Luke's never been much interested, but I thought –

MR. WEBB. A book came into my office the other day, George, on the Philo System of raising chickens. I want you to read it. I'm thinking of beginning in a small way in the back yard, and I'm going to put an incubator in the cellar –