

They brought up two children apiece, washed, cleaned the house – and *never a nervous breakdown.*

(MRS. GIBBS grinds coffee into pot above stove. MRS. WEBB puts pot on stove and starts to make corn bread.)

It's like what one of those Middle West poets said: You've got to love life to have life, and you've got to have life to love life...It's what they call a vicious circle.

HOWIE NEWSOME. *(offstage left)* Giddap, Bessie!

(Sound of milk bottles in a rack starts off left and continues through scene as in Act I. MRS. GIBBS crosses to sink to pump water into a pot.)

STAGE MANAGER. Here comes Howie Newsome delivering the milk.

(Sound of newspapers slapping on verandahs off right. HOWIE starts down left, rack in hand.)

And there's Si Crowell delivering the papers like his brother before him.

(STAGE MANAGER watches a moment, then drifts off downstage.)

(MRS. GIBBS crosses to pump water into coffee pot.)

(SI CROWELL has entered hurling imaginary newspapers into doorways per Joe Crowell's routine in Act I; HOWIE NEWSOME has come along Main Street with Bessie.)

SI CROWELL. Morning, Howie.

HOWIE NEWSOME. Morning, Si. – Anything in the papers I ought to know? *(Stops. Sets rack down.)*

(MRS. GIBBS puts coffee on stove, crosses to cupboard and prepares two pieces of French toast. She holds back tears for a moment. MRS. WEBB crosses to cupboard to slice bacon and rearrange the shelves.)

SI CROWELL. Nothing much, except we're losing about the best baseball pitcher Grover's Corners ever had – George Gibbs.

HOWIE NEWSOME. Reckon he is.

SI CROWELL. He could hit and run bases, too.

HOWIE NEWSOME. Yep. Mighty fine ball player.

(Horse whinny off left.)

(looking off left) – Whoa! Bessie! I guess I can stop and talk if I've a mind to!

SI CROWELL. I don't see how he could give up a thing like that just to get married. Would you, Howie?

HOWIE NEWSOME. Can't tell, Si. Never had no talent that way.

(CONSTABLE WARREN enters. He walks with a cane, a little older than before. They exchange good mornings.)

You're up early, Bill.

(MRS. GIBBS puts French toast into skillet on stove, then gets cloth from cupboard, lays table, sets cup and plate for dog.)

CONSTABLE WARREN. Seein' if there's anything I can do to prevent a flood. River's been risin' all night.

HOWIE NEWSOME. Si Crowell's all worked up here about George Gibbs' retiring from baseball.

CONSTABLE WARREN. Yes, sir; that's the way it goes. Back in '84 we had a player, Si – even George Gibbs couldn't touch him. Name of Hank Todd. Went down to Maine and become a parson. Wonderful ball player. – Howie, how does the weather look to you?

HOWIE NEWSOME. Oh, 'tain't bad. Think maybe it'll clear up for good.

(CONSTABLE WARREN continues on his way.)

(SI starts off, throwing newspapers, exits.)

(MRS. WEBB puts bacon on stove, then washes and dries her hands at sink.)