

*(sounds of excited chickens)*

**MRS. GIBBS.** *(feeding chickens)* Here, chick, chick, chick.

No, go away, you. Go away. Here, chick, chick, chick. What's the matter with *you*? Fight, fight, fight, – that's all you do. Hm...*you* don't belong to me. Where'd you come from? *(flinging last of her feed, which causes loud clucks)*

*(She shakes her apron.)*

*(MRS. WEBB, laden with two large bowls, crosses through trellis, sits on bench and begins stringing beans.)*

**MRS. GIBBS.** Oh, don't be so scared. Nobody's going to hurt you. *(MRS. GIBBS turning to catch sight of MRS. WEBB)* Good morning, Myrtle. How's your cold?

**MRS. WEBB.** Well, I still get that tickling feeling in my throat. I told Charles I didn't know as I'd go to choir practice tonight. Wouldn't be any use.

**MRS. GIBBS.** Have you tried singing over your voice?

**MRS. WEBB.** Yes, but somehow I can't do that and stay on the key. While I'm resting myself I thought I'd string some of these beans.

**MRS. GIBBS.** *(rolling up her sleeves as she crosses the stage for a chat)* Let me help you. Beans have been good this year.

**MRS. WEBB.** I've decided to put up forty quarts if it kills me. The children say they hate 'em, but I notice they're able to get 'em down all winter.

*(Pause. Brief sound of chickens cackling.)*

**MRS. GIBBS.** Now, Myrtle. I've got to tell you something, because if I don't tell somebody I'll burst.

**MRS. WEBB.** Why, Julia Gibbs!

**MRS. GIBBS.** Here, give me some more of those beans. Myrtle, did one of those second-hand furniture men from Boston come to see you last Friday?

MRS. WEBB. No-o.

MRS. GIBBS. Well, he called on me. First I thought he was a patient wantin' to see Dr. Gibbs. 'N he wormed his way into my parlor, and, Myrtle Webb, *(both stop work)* he offered me three hundred and fifty dollars for Grandmother Wentworth's highboy, as I'm sitting here!

MRS. WEBB. Why, Julia Gibbs!

MRS. GIBBS. He did! That old thing! *(continues work)* Why, it was so big I didn't know where to put it and I almost give it to Cousin Hester Wilcox.

MRS. WEBB. Well, you're going to take it, aren't you?

MRS. GIBBS. I don't know.

MRS. WEBB. You don't know – three hundred and fifty dollars! What's come over you?

MRS. GIBBS. Well, if I could get the Doctor to take the money and go away someplace on a real trip, I'd sell it like that. *(stops work)* – Y'know, Myrtle, it's been the dream of my life to see Paris, France.

*(glances shyly at MRS. WEBB, who is shocked, then laughs, hand to face)*

– Oh, I don't know. It sounds crazy, I suppose, but for years I've been promising myself that if we ever had the chance –

MRS. WEBB. How does the Doctor feel about it?

MRS. GIBBS. *(continues to work through scene)* Well, I did beat about the bush a little and said that if I got a legacy – that's the way I put it – I'd make him take me somewhere.

MRS. WEBB. M-m-m...What did he say?

MRS. GIBBS. You know how he is. I haven't heard a serious word out of him since I've known him. No, he said, it might make him discontented with Grover's Corners to go traipsin' about Europe; better let well enough alone, he says. Every two

years he makes a trip to the battlefields of the Civil War and that's enough treat for anybody, he says.

**MRS. WEBB.** Well, Mr. Webb just *admires* the way Dr. Gibbs knows everything about the Civil War. Mr. Webb's a good mind to give up Napoleon and move over to the Civil War, only Dr. Gibbs being one of the greatest experts in the country just makes him despair.

**MRS. GIBBS.** It's a fact! Dr. Gibbs is never so happy as when he's at Antietam or Gettysburg. The times I've walked over those hills, Myrtle, stopping at every bush and pacing it all out, like we were going to buy it.

**MRS. WEBB.** Well, if that second-hand man's really serious about buyin' it, Julia, you sell it. And then you'll get to see Paris, all right. Just keep droppin' hints from time to time – that's how I got to see the Atlantic Ocean, y'know.

**MRS. GIBBS.** Oh, I'm sorry I mentioned it. Only it seems to me that once in your life before you die you ought to see a country where they don't talk in English and don't even want to.

*(The STAGE MANAGER enters briskly from the right. He tips his hat to the ladies, who nod their heads.)*

**STAGE MANAGER.** Thank you, ladies. Thank you very much.

*(MRS. GIBBS and MRS. WEBB gather up their things, return into their homes and disappear.)*

Now we're going to skip a few hours. But first we want a little more information about the town, kind of a scientific account, you might say. So I've asked Professor Willard of our State University to sketch in a few details of our past history here. Is Professor Willard here?