

## **Our Town by Thornton Wilder**

The first performance of this play took place at the McCarter Theatre, Princeton, New Jersey, on January 22, 1938. The first New York performance was at the Henry Miller Theatre, February 4, 1938. It was produced and directed by Jed Harris.

### CHARACTERS (in the order of their appearance)

Stage Manager  
Dr. Gibbs  
Joe Crowell  
Howie Newsome  
Mrs. Gibbs  
Mrs. Webb  
George Gibbs  
Rebecca Gibbs  
Wally Webb  
Emily Webb  
Professor Willard  
Mr. Webb  
Woman In The Audience  
Simon Stimson  
Mrs. Soames  
Constable Warren  
Si Crowell  
Sam Craig  
Joe Stoddard

The entire play takes place in Grover's Corners, New Hampshire.

# Our Town by Thornton Wilder

## ACT I

*No curtain. No scenery.*

*The audience, arriving, sees an empty stage in half-light. Presently the Stage Manager. When the Stage Manager reaches his place, the lights come to black.*

*After one count, the lights come to full.*

Stage Manager

This play is called "Our Town." The day is May 7, 1901. The time is just before dawn.

*A rooster crows.*

The sky is beginning to show some streaks of light over in the East there, behind our mount'in.

Well, I'd better show you how our town lies. Up here is Main Street. Way back there is the railway station. Polish Town's across the tracks.

Over there is the Congregational Church; across the street's the Presbyterian. Methodist and Unitarian are over there. Baptist is down in the holla' by the river. Catholic Church is over beyond the tracks.

Here's the Town Hall and Post Office combined; jail's in the basement.

Here's the grocery store and here's Mr. Morgan's drugstore. Most everybody in town manages to look into those two stores once a day.

Public School's over yonder. High School's still farther over. Quarter of nine mornings, noontimes, and three o'clock afternoons, the hull town can hear the yelling and screaming from those schoolyards.

This is our doctor's house, Doc Gibbs'. This is the back door.

This is Mrs. Gibbs' garden. Corn...peas...beans...hollyhocks...heliotrope... and a lot of burdock.

And this is Mrs. Webb's garden. Just like Mrs. Gibbs'. Only it's got a lot of sunflowers, too.

Nice town, y'know what I mean?

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Stage Manager (*Continued*)

Nobody very remarkable ever come out of it, s'far as we know. The earliest tombstones in the cemetery up there on the mountain say 1670-1680. There are Grovers and Cartwrights` and Gibbises and Herseys; same names as are around here now.

Well, as I said; it's about dawn.

*A train whistle is heard.*  
*The Stage Manager takes out his watch and nods.*

So...another day's begun.

There's Doc Gibbs comin' down Main Street now. And here's his wife comin' downstairs to get breakfast.

*Mrs. Gibbs enters.*

And there comes Joe Crowell, Jr., delivering Mr. Webb's *Sentinel*.

*Dr. Gibbs enters.*  
*Joe Crowell, jr., enters down center aisle.*

Joe Crowell, Jr.

Morning, Doc Gibbs.

Dr. Gibbs

Morning, Joe.

Joe Crowell, Jr.

Somebody been sick, Doc?

Dr. Gibbs

No. Just some twins born over in Polish Town.

Joe Crowell, Jr.

Do you want your paper now?

Dr. Gibbs

Yes, I'll take it. Anything serious goin' on in the world since Wednesday?

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Joe Crowell, Jr.

Yes sir. My schoolteacher, Miss Foster's, getting married to a fella over in Concord.

Dr. Gibbs

I declare. How do you boys feel about that?

Joe Crowell, Jr.

Well, of course, it's none of my business but I think if a person starts out to be a teacher she ought to stay one.

*Joe exits.*

*Dr. Gibbs stands reading his paper.*

Stage Manager

Want to tell you something about that boy Joe Crowell there. Joe was awful bright...graduated from high school here, head of his class. So he got a scholarship to Massachusetts Tech. Graduated head of his class there, too. It was all wrote up in the Boston paper at the time. Goin' to be a great engineer, Joe was. But the war broke out and he died in France. All that education for nothing.

Howie Newsome (*Off stage*)

Giddap, Bessie! What's the matter with you today?

Stage Manager

Here comes Howie Newsome, deliverin' the milk.

*Howie Newsome enters center aisle.*

Howie Newsome

Morning, Doc.

Dr. Gibbs

Morning, Howie.

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Howie Newsome

Somebody sick?

Dr. Gibbs

Pair of twins over to Mrs. Goruslawski's.

Howie Newsome

Twins, eh? This town's gettin' bigger every year.

Mrs. Gibbs

Good morning, Howie.

Howie Newsome

Morning, Mrs. Gibbs.

Mrs. Gibbs

Seems like you're late today.

Howie Newsome

Yes. Somep'n went wrong with the separator. Don't know what 'twas.

*(Turns to Dr. Gibbs.)*

Doc

Dr. Gibbs

Howie!

Mrs. Gibbs *(Calling upstairs)*.

Children! Children! Time to get up.

Howie Newsome

Come on, Bessie!

Howie Newsome *exits*.

Mrs. Gibbs

George! Rebecca!

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Dr. Gibbs *turns to Mrs. Gibbs.*

Mrs. Gibbs

Everything all right, Frank?

Dr. Gibbs

Yes, I declare...easy as kittens.

Mrs. Gibbs

Set down and drink your coffee. You can catch a couple hours' sleep this morning, can't you?

Dr. Gibbs

Hm! Mrs. Wentworth's coming at eleven. Guess I know what it's about, too. Her strannick ain't what it ought to be.

Mrs. Gibbs

All told, you won't get more'n three hours' sleep. Frank Gibbs, I don't know what's goin' to become of you. I do wish I could get you to go away someplace and take a rest. I think it would do you good.

Mrs. Webb (*speaking as she enters.*)

Emileeee! Time to get up! Wally! Seven o'clock!

Mrs. Gibbs

I declare, you got to speak to George. Seems like something's come over him lately. He's no help to me at all. I can't even get him to cut me some wood.

Dr. Gibbs

Is he sassy to you?

Mrs. Gibbs

No. He just whines! All he thinks about is that baseball.

Mrs. Gibbs *shouts upstairs.*

George! Rebecca! You'll be late for school.

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Dr. Gibbs

M-m-m...

Mrs. Gibbs

George!

Dr. Gibbs

George, look sharp!

George' (*Off stage*)

Yes, Pa!

Dr. Gibbs

Don't you hear your mother calling you? I guess I'll go upstairs and get forty winks.

Dr Gibbs *exits*.

Mrs. Webb

Walleee! Emileee! You'll be late for school! Walleee! You wash yourself good or I'll come up and do it myself.

Rebecca Gibbs (*off stage*)

Ma! What dress shall I wear?

Mrs. Gibbs

Don't make a noise. Your father's been out all night and needs his sleep. I washed and ironed the blue gingham for you special.

Rebecca

Ma, I hate that dress.

Mrs. Gibbs

Oh, hush-up-with-you.

Rebecca

Every day I go to school dressed like a sick turkey.

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Mrs. Gibbs

Now, Rebecca, you always look *very* nice.

Rebecca

Mama, George's throwing soap at me.

Mrs. Gibbs

I'll come and slap the both of you. That's what I'll do.

*A factory whistle sounds.  
The children dash in and take their places.*

Stage Manager

We've got a factory in our town too; hear it? Makes blankets.

Mrs. Webb

Children! Now I won't have it. Breakfast is just as good as any other meal and I won't have you gobbling like wolves. It'll stunt your growth. That's a fact. Put away your book, Wally.

Wally

Aw, Ma! By ten o'clock I got to know all about Canada.

Mrs. Webb

You know the rule's well as I do No books at table. As for me, I'd rather have my children healthy than bright.

Emily

I'm both, Mama, You know I am. I'm the brightest girl in school for my age. I have a wonderful memory.

Mrs. Webb

Eat your breakfast.

Wally

I'm bright, too, when I'm looking at my stamp collection.



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Mrs. Gibbs

I'll speak to your father about it when he's rested. Seems to me twenty-five cents a week's enough for a boy your age. I declare I don't know how you spend it all.

George

Aw, Ma. I gotta lotta things to buy.

Mrs. Gibbs

Strawberry phosphates! That's what you spend it on.

George

I don't see how Rebecca comes to have so much money. She has more'n a dollar.

Rebecca

I've been saving it up gradual.

Mrs. Gibbs

Well, dear, I think it's a good thing to spend some every now and then.

Rebecca

Mama, do you know what I love most in the world. Do you? Money.

Mrs. Gibbs

Eat your breakfast.

The Children (*Overlapping*)

Mama, there's first bell! I gotta hurry! I don't want any more! I gotta hurry!

George, Rebecca, Emily *and* Wally *exit center aisle*.

Mrs. Webb

Walk fast, but you don't have to run. Wally, pull up your pants at the knee. Stand up straight, Emily.

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Mrs. Gibbs

Tell Miss Foster I send her my best congratulations. Can you remember that?

Rebecca

Yes, Ma.

Mrs. Gibbs

You look real nice, Rebecca. Pick up your feet.

All:

Good-by.

Mrs. Gibbs *and* Mrs. Webb stand center.

Mrs. Gibbs

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.

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

Myrtle, did one of those secondhand-furniture men from Boston come to see you last Friday?

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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, he offered me three hundred fifty dollars for Grandmother Wentworth's highboy, as I'm sitting here!

Mrs. Webb

Why, Julia Gibbs!

Mrs. Gibbs

He did! That old thing! 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 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. Y'know, Myrtle, it's been the dream of my life to see Paris, France. 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

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.

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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.

Mrs. Webb

Well, if that secondhand 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.

Stage Manager

Thank you, ladies. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Gibbs *and* Mrs. Webb *exit*.

Stage Manager

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?

Professor Willard *enters*.

May I introduce Professor Willard of our State University.

*Turns to* Professor Willard

A few brief notes, thank you, Professor,—unfortunately our time is limited

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Professor Willard

Grover's Corners...let me see...Grover's Corners lies on the old Pleistocene granite of the Appalachian range. I may say it's some of the oldest land in the world. We're very proud of that. Some highly interesting fossils have been found...I may say: unique fossils...two miles out of town, in Silas Peckham's cow pasture. Shall I read some of Professor Gruber's notes on the meteorological situation...mean precipitation, et cetera?

Stage Manager

Afraid we won't have time for that, Professor. We might have a few words on the history of man here.

Professor Willard

Yes...anthropological data: Early Amerindian stock. Cotahatchee tribes...no evidence before the tenth century of this era...hmm...now entirely disappeared...possible traces in three families...

Stage Manager

And the population, Professor Willard?

Professor Willard

Within the town limits: 2,640.

Stage Manager

Just a moment, Professor.

*He whispers into the professor's ear.*

Professor Willard

Oh, yes, indeed? The population, *at the moment*, is 2,642. The Postal District brings in 507 more, making a total of 3,149. Mortality and birth rates: constant. By MacPherson's gauge: 6.032.

Stage Manager

Thank you very much, Professor. We're all very much obliged to you, I'm sure.

Professor Willard

Not at all, sir; not at all.

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Stage Manager

This way, Professor, and thank you again.

*Exit Professor Willard.*

Now the political and social report: Editor Webb. Mr. Webb?

Mrs. Webb *enters*.

Mrs. Webb

He'll be here in a minute...He just cut his hand while he was eatin' an apple.

Stage Manager

Thank you, Mrs. Webb.

Mrs. Webb

*Turns upstage and exits as she speaks.*

Charles! Everybody's waitin'.

Stage Manager

Mr. Webb is Publisher and Editor of the Grover's Corners *Sentinel*. That's our local paper, y'know.

*Enter Mr. Webb.*

Mr. Webb

Well...I don't have to tell you that we're run here by a Board of Selectmen. All males vote at the age of twenty-one. Women vote indirect. We're lower middle class: sprinkling of professional men...ten per cent illiterate laborers. Politically, we're eighty-six per cent Republicans; six per cent Democrats; four per cent Socialists; rest, indifferent. Religiously, we're eighty-five per cent Protestants; twelve per cent Catholics; rest, indifferent.

Stage Manager

Have you any comments, Mr. Webb?

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Mr. Webb

Very ordinary town, if you ask me. Little better behaved than most. But our young people here seem to like it well enough. Ninety per cent of 'em graduating from high school settle down right here to live...even when they've been away to college.

Stage Manager

Now, is there anyone in the audience who would like to ask Editor Webb anything about the town?

Lady in a Box

Oh, Mr. Webb? Mr. Webb, is there any culture or love of beauty in Grover's Corners?

Mr. Webb

Well, ma'am, there ain't much; not in the sense you mean. Come to think of it, there's some girls that play the piano at High School Commencement; but they ain't happy about it. No, ma'am, there isn't much culture; but maybe this is the place to tell you that we've got a lot of pleasures of a kind here. We like the sun comin' up over the mountain in the morning and we all notice a good deal about the birds. We pay a lot of attention to them. And we watch the change of the seasons; yes, everybody knows about them.

Mr. Webb *exits*.

Stage Manager

Thank you, Mr. Webb. Now, we'll go back to the town. It's early afternoon. All 2,642 have had their dinners and all the dishes have been washed. There's an early-afternoon calm in our town...a buzzin' and a hummin' from the school buildings...only a few buggies on Main Street...the horses dozing at the hitching posts. You all remember what it's like. Doc Gibbs is in his office, tapping people and making them say "ah." Mr. Webb's cuttin' his lawn over there.

*(Shrill girls' voices are heard.)*

No, sir. It's later than I thought. There are the children coming home from school already.

*Emily enters.*

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Emily

I *can't*, Lois. I've got to go home and help my mother. I *promised*.

Mr. Webb

Emily, walk simply. Who do you think you are today?

Emily

Papa, you're terrible. One minute you tell me to stand up straight and the next minute you call me names. I just don't listen to you.

*She gives him an abrupt kiss.*

Mr. Webb

Golly, I never got a kiss from such a great lady before.

Mr. Webb *exits*.

George Gibbs *enters*.

George

Hello, Emily.

Emily

H'lo.

George

You made a fine speech in class.

Emily

Well... I was really ready to make a speech about the Monroe Doctrine, but at the last minute Miss Corcoran made me talk about the Louisiana Purchase instead. I worked an awful long time on both of them.

George

Gee, it's funny, Emily. From my window up there I can just see your head nights when you're doing your homework over in your room.



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Emily

Why, can you?

George

You certainly do stick to it, Emily. I don't see how you can sit still that long. I guess you like school.

Emily

Well, I always feel it's something you have to go through.

George

Yeah.

Emily

I don't mind it really. It passes the time.

George

Yeah. Emily, what do you think? We might work out a kinda telegraph from your window to mine; and once in a while you could give me a kinda hint or two about one of those algebra problems. I don't mean the answers, Emily, of course not . . . just some little hint...

Emily

Oh, I think *hints* are allowed. So...ah...f you get stuck George...you whistle to me and I'll give you some hints.

George

Emily, you're just naturally bright, I guess.

Emily

I figure that it's just the way a person's born.

George

Yeah. But, you see, I want to be a farmer, and my Uncle Luke says whenever I'm ready I can come over and work on his farm and if I'm any good I can just gradually have it.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

You mean the house and everything?

Mrs. Webb *enters*.

George

Yeah. Well, thanks. I better be getting out to the baseball field. Thanks for the talk, Emily. Good afternoon, Mrs. Webb.

Mrs. Webb

Good afternoon, George.

George

So long, Emily.

Emily

So long, George.

Mrs. Webb

George Gibbs let himself have a real conversation, didn't he? Why, he's growing up. How old would George be?

Emily

I don't know.

Mrs. Webb

Let's see. He must be almost sixteen.

Emily

Mama, I made a speech in class today and I was very good.

Mrs. Webb

You must recite it to your father at supper. What was it about?

Emily

The Louisiana Purchase. It was like silk off a spool. I'm going to make speeches all my life. Mama...Mama, will you answer me a question, serious?

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Mrs. Webb

Seriously, dear; not serious.

Emily

Seriously, will you?

Mrs. Webb

Of course, I will.

Emily

Mama, am I good looking?

Mrs. Webb

Yes, of course you are. All my children have got good features; I'd be ashamed if they hadn't.

Emily

Oh, Mama, that's not what I mean. What I mean is: am I *pretty*?

Mrs. Webb

I've already told you, yes. Now that's enough of that. You have a nice young pretty face. I never heard of such foolishness.

Emily

Oh, Mama, you never tell us the truth about anything.

Mrs. Webb

I *am* telling you the truth.

Emily

Mama, were *you* pretty?

Mrs. Webb

Yes, I was, if I do say it. I was the prettiest girl in town next to Mamie Cartwright.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

But, Mama, you've got to say *something* about me. Am I pretty enough..to get anybody...to get people interested in me?

Mrs. Webb

Emily, you make me tired. Now stop it. You're pretty enough for all normal purposes

Emily

Oh, Mama, you're no help at all.

*The lights gradually dim to darkness as the choir begins singing "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds". Simon Stimson directs them.  
.George and Emily set and mount their 'ladders'.*

Stage Manager

Well!...good deal of time's gone by. It's evening. You can hear choir practice going on in the Congregational Church. The children are at home doing their schoolwork. The day's running down like a tired clock.

Simon Stimson

Now look here, everybody. Music come into the world to give pleasure. Softer! Softer! Get it out of your heads that music's only good when it's loud. You leave loudness to the Methodists. You couldn't beat 'em, even if you wanted to. Now again. Tenors!

George

Hsst! Emily!

Emily

Hello.

George

Hello!

Emily

I can't work at all. The moonlight's so *terrible*.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

George

Emily, did you get the third problem?

Emily

Which?

George

The *third*?

Emily

Why, yes, George. That's the easiest of them all.

George

I don't see it. Emily, can you give me a hint?

Emily

I'll tell you one thing...the answer's in yards.

George

In yards? How do you mean?

Emily

In *square* yards.

George

Oh...in square yards.

Emily

Yes, George, don't you see?

George

Yeah.

Emily

In square yards of *wallpaper*.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

George

Wallpaper. Oh, I see. Thanks a lot, Emily.

Emily

You're welcome. My, isn't the moonlight *terrible*? And choir practice going on. I think if you hold your breath you can hear the train all the way to Contoocook. Hear it?

George

M-m-m...what do you know!

Emily

Well, I guess I better go back and try to work.

George

Good night, Emily. And thanks.

Emily

Good night, George.

Simon Stimson

Before I forget it; how many of you will be able to come in Tuesday afternoon and sing at Fred Hersey's wedding? Show your hands. That'll be fine; that'll be right nice. We'll do the same music we did for Jane Trowbridge's last month. Now we'll do, "Art Thou Weary; Art Thou Languid?" It's a question, ladies and gentlemen, make it talk. Ready.

Dr. Gibbs *enters*.

Dr. Gibbs

Oh, George, can you come down a minute?

George

Yes, Pa.

*George descends the ladder.*

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Dr. Gibbs

Make yourself comfortable, George; I'll only keep you a minute. George, how old are you?

George

I? I'm sixteen, almost seventeen.

Dr. Gibbs

What do you want to do after school's over?

George

Why, you know, Pa. I want to be a farmer on Uncle Luke's farm.

Dr. Gibbs

You'll be willing, will you, to get up early and milk and feed the stock ... and you'll be able to hoe and hay all day?

George

Sure, I will. What are you...what do you mean, Pa?

Dr. Gibbs

Well, George, while I was in my office today I heard a funny sound...and what do you think it was? It was your mother chopping wood. There you see your mother...getting up early; cooking meals all day long; washing and ironing and still she has to go out in the back yard and chop wood. I suppose she just got tired of asking you. She just gave up and decided it was easier to do it herself. And you eat her meals, and put on the clothes she keeps nice for you, and you run off and play baseball...like she's some hired girl we keep around the house but that we don't like very much. Well, I knew all I had to do was call your attention to it. Here's a handkerchief, son. George, I've decided to raise your spending money twenty-five cents a week. Not, of course, for chopping wood for your mother, because that's a present you give her, but because you're getting older and I imagine there are lots of things you must find to do with it.

George

Thanks, Pa.

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Dr. Gibbs

Let's see...tomorrow's your payday. You can count on it. Hmm. Probably Rebecca'll feel she ought to have some more too. Wonder what could have happened to your mother. Choir practice never was as late as this before.

George

It's only half past eight, Pa.

Dr. Gibbs

I don't know why she's in that old choir. She hasn't any more voice than an old crow... Traipsin' around the streets at this hour of the night...just about time you retired, don't you think?

George

Yes, Pa.

*George mounts to his place on the ladder.  
Laughter and good nights can be heard from the Choir members. Mrs. Gibbs,  
Mrs. Soames and Mrs. Webb come down Main Street. They stop.*

Mrs. Soames (to off stage)

Good night, Martha. Good night, Mr. Foster.

Mrs. Gibbs

Real nice choir practice, wa'n't it? (Pause) Myrtle Webb! Look at that moon, will you! Potato weather, for sure.

*The three are silent a moment, gazing up at the moon.*

Mrs. Soames

Naturally I didn't want to say a word about it in front of those others, but now we're alone...really, it's the worst scandal that ever was in this town!

Mrs. Gibbs

What?

Mrs. Soames:

Simon Stimson!



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Mrs. Gibbs

Now, Louella!

Mrs. Soames:

But, Julia! To have the organist of a church *drink* and *drunk* year after year. You know he was drunk tonight.

Mrs. Gibbs

Now, Louella! We all know about Mr. Stimson, and we all know about the troubles he's been through, and Dr. Ferguson knows too, and if Dr. Ferguson keeps him on there in his job the only thing the rest of us can do is just not to notice it.

Mrs. Soames

*Not to notice it!* But it's getting worse.

Mrs. Webb

No, it isn't, Louella. It's getting better. I've been in that choir twice as long as you have. It doesn't happen anywhere near so often.

*They look at the moon in silence.*

My, I hate to go to bed on a night like this. I better hurry. Those children'll be sitting up till all hours. Good night, Louella.

*They all exchange good nights. Mrs. Webb and Mrs. Soames exit. Mrs. Gibbs and Dr. Gibbs meet at center.*

Mrs. Gibbs

Well, we had a real good time.

Dr. Gibbs

You're late enough.

Mrs. Gibbs

Why, Frank, it ain't any later 'n usual.

Dr. Gibbs

And you stopping at the corner to gossip with a lot of hens.

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Mrs. Gibbs

Now, Frank, don't be grouchy. Just smell the heliotrope in the moonlight. Isn't that wonderful? What did you do all the time I was away?

Dr. Gibbs

Oh, I read. As usual. What were the girls gossiping about tonight?

Mrs. Gibbs

Well, believe me, Frank, there is something to gossip about.

Dr. Gibbs

Hmm! Simon Stimson far gone, was he?

Mrs. Gibbs

Worst I've ever seen him. How'll that end, Frank? Dr. Ferguson can't forgive him forever.

Dr. Gibbs

I guess I know more about Simon Stimson's affairs than anybody in this town. Some people ain't made for small-town life. I don't know how that'll end; but there's nothing we can do but just leave it alone. Come, get in.

Mrs. Gibbs

No, not yet...Frank, I'm worried about you.

Dr. Gibbs

What are you worried about?

Mrs. Gibbs

I think it's my duty to make plans for you to get a real rest and change. And if I get that legacy, well, I'm going to insist on it,

Dr. Gibbs

Now, Julia, there's no sense in going over that again.

Mrs. Gibbs

Frank, you're just *unreasonable!*

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Dr. Gibbs

*Starting into the house.*

Come on, Julia, it's getting late. First thing you know you'll catch cold. I gave George a piece of my mind tonight. I reckon you'll have your wood chopped for a while anyway. Now, let's get upstairs.

Mrs. Gibbs

You know, Frank, Mrs. Fairchild always locks her front door every night. All those people up that part of town do.

Dr. Gibbs

They're all getting citified, that's the trouble with them. They haven't got nothing fit to burgle and everybody knows it.

Dr Gibbs *and* Mrs. Gibbs *exit*.  
Rebecca *climbs up the ladder beside* George.

George

Get out, Rebecca. There's only room for one at this window. You're always spoiling everything.

Rebecca

Well, let me look just a minute.

George

Use your own window.

Rebecca

I did, but there's no moon there...George, do you know what I think...do you? I think maybe the moon's getting nearer and nearer and there'll be a big 'splosion.

George

Rebecca, you don't know anything. If the moon were getting nearer, the guys that sit up all night with telescopes would see it first and they'd tell about it, and it'd be in all the newspapers.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Rebecca

George, is the moon shining on South America, Canada and half the whole world?

George

Well...prob'ly is.

*The sound of crickets is heard.*

Stage Manager

Nine thirty. Most of the lights are out. No, there's Constable Warren trying a few doors on Main Street. And here comes Editor Webb, after putting his newspaper to bed.

Constable Warren *and* Mr. Webb *enter*.

Mr. Webb

Good evening, Bill.

Constable Warren

Evenin', Mr. Webb.

Mr. Webb

Quite a moon!

Constable Warren

Yepp.

Mr. Webb

All quiet tonight?

Constable Warren

Simon Stimson is rollin' around a little. Just saw his wife movin' out to hunt for him so I looked the other way. There he is now.

*Simon Stimson enters, only a trace of unsteadiness in his walk.*

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Mr. Webb

Good evening, Simon . . . Town seems to have settled down for the night pretty well. . . .

Simon Stimson *faces Mr. Webb, stares at him, swaying slightly.*

Mr. Webb (*Continued*)

Yes, most of the town's settled down for the night, Simon.... I guess we better do the same. Can I walk along a ways with you?

Simon Stimson *exits without a word.*

Mr. Webb (*Continued*)

Good night.

Constable Warren

I don't know how that's goin' to end, Mr. Webb.

Mr. Webb

Well, he's seen a peck of trouble, one thing after another. Well, good night, Bill.

Constable Warren

Good night, Mr. Webb.

Constable Warren *exits.*

Mr. Webb

Who's that up there? Is that you, Myrtle?

Emily

No, it's me, Papa.

Mr. Webb

Why aren't you in bed?

Emily

I don't know. I just can't sleep yet, Papa. The moonlight's so wonderful. And the smell of Mrs. Gibbs' heliotrope. Can you smell it?

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Mr. Webb

Hm...Yes. Haven't any troubles on your mind, have you, Emily?

Emily

*Troubles, Papa? No.*

Mr. Webb

Well, enjoy yourself, but don't let your mother catch you. Good night, Emily.

Emily

Good night, Papa.

*Mr. Webb exits, whistling "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds".*

Rebecca

I never told you about that letter Jane Crofut got from her minister when she was sick. He wrote Jane a letter and on the envelope the address was like this: It said: Jane Crofut; The Crofut Farm; Grover's Corners; Sutton County; New Hampshire; United States of America.

George

What's funny about that?

Rebecca

But listen, it's not finished: the United States of America; Continent of North America; Western Hemisphere; the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the Mind of God...that's what it said on the envelope.

George

What do you know!

Rebecca

And the postman brought it just the same.

George

What do you know!

## **Our Town by Thornton Wilder**

*Lights dim to black as George and Emily replace their ladders.  
The Choir sings. Lights fade up to full.*

Stage Manager

Three years have gone by. Yes, the sun's come up over a thousand times.

Some babies that weren't even born before have begun talking regular sentences already; and a number of people who thought they were right young and spry have noticed that they can't bound up a flight of stairs like they used to, without their heart fluttering a little.

All that can happen in a thousand days.

Nature's been pushing and contriving in other ways, too: a number of young people fell in love and got married. Almost everybody in the world gets married. In our town there aren't hardly any exceptions. Most everybody in the world climbs into their graves married.

So, it's three years later. It's 1904.

It's July 7th, just after High School Commencement. That's the time most of our young people jump up and get married. Soon as they've passed their last examinations in solid geometry and Cicero's Orations, looks like they suddenly feel themselves fit to be married.

It's early morning. Only this time it's been raining. It's been pouring and thundering.

There! You can hear the 5:45 for Boston.

*Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Webb enter.*

And there's Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Webb come down to make breakfast, just as though it were an ordinary day. I don't have to point out to the women in my audience that those ladies they see before them, both of those ladies cooked three meals a day—one of 'em for twenty years, the other for forty—and no summer vacation. They brought up two children apiece, washed, cleaned the house,—and never a nervous breakdown. 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.

Here comes Howie Newsome delivering the milk. And there's Si Crowell delivering the papers like his brother before him.

*Si Crowell and Howie Newsome enter.*

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Si Crowell

Morning, Howie.

Howie Newsome

Morning, Si. Anything in the papers I ought to know?

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

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*.

You're up early, Bill.

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?



## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Howie Newsome

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

Constable Warren *and* Si Crowell *exit*.

Mrs. Gibbs

Good morning, Howie. Do you think it's going to rain again?

Howie Newsome

Morning, Mrs. Gibbs. It rained so heavy, I think maybe it'll clear up.

Mrs. Gibbs

Certainly hope it will.

Howie Newsome

How much did you want today?

Mrs. Gibbs

I'm going to have a houseful of relations, Howie. Looks to me like I'll need three-a-milk and two-a-cream.

Howie Newsome

My wife says to tell you we both hope they'll be very happy, Mrs. Gibbs. Know they will.

Mrs. Gibbs

Thanks a lot, Howie.

Howie Newsome

Howie Newsome *crosses to* Mrs. Webb.

Morning, Mrs. Webb.

Mrs. Webb

Oh, good morning, Mr. Newsome. I told you four quarts of milk, but I hope you can spare me another.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Howie Newsome

Yes'm...and the two of cream.

Mrs. Webb

Will it start raining again, Mr. Newsome?

Howie Newsome

Well...just sayin' to Mrs. Gibbs as how it may lighten up. Mrs. Newsome told me to tell you as how we hope they'll both be very happy, Mrs. Webb. Know they will.

Mrs. Webb

Thank you, and thank Mrs. Newsome

Howie Newsome *exits*. Dr. Gibbs *enters*.

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.

Dr. Gibbs

The groom's up shaving himself. Only there ain't an awful lot to shave. 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.

Mrs. Gibbs

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. (*Pause*) 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

Now don't start that, Frank Gibbs.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Dr. Gibbs

I was the scarest young fella in the State of New Hampshire. I thought I'd made a mistake for sure. 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. Gibbs

And how do you think I felt! *(Pause)* Frank, weddings are perfectly awful things. Farces, that's what they are!

Dr. Gibbs

How'd you sleep last night, Julia?

Mrs. Gibbs

Well, I heard a lot of the hours struck off.

Dr. Gibbs

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

Well, mother and daughter's no picnic, let me tell you.

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. Gibbs

Yes...people are meant to go through life two by two. 'Tain't natural to be lonesome.

*Pause. Dr. Gibbs starts laughing.*

Dr. Gibbs

Julia, do you know one of the things I was scared of when I married you?

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Mrs. Gibbs

Oh, go along with you!

Dr. Gibbs

I was afraid we wouldn't have material for conversation more'n'd last us a few weeks. 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.

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?

Dr. Gibbs

No. Only day of the year Rebecca hasn't been managing everybody'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 down here.

*George enters.*

George

Good morning, everybody. Only five more hours to live.

*George turns to exit*

Mrs. Gibbs

George Gibbs, where are you going?

George

Just stepping across the grass to see my girl.

*George turns to exit.*

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.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

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 *exits*.

Mrs. Gibbs

From tomorrow on you can kill yourself in all weathers, but while you're in my house you'll live wisely, thank you.

George

Be back in a minute.

George *turns to* Mrs. Webb.

Mrs. Webb

Goodness! You frightened me! Now, George, you can come in a minute, but you know I can't ask you in.

George

Why not?

Mr. Webb *enters*.

Mrs. Webb

George, you know's well as I do: the groom can't see his bride on his wedding day, not until he sees her in church.

George

Aw, that's just a superstition. Good morning, Mr. Webb.

Mr. Webb

Good morning, George.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

George

Mr. Webb, you don't believe in that superstition, do you?

Mr. Webb

There's a lot of common sense in some superstitions, George.

Mrs. Webb

Millions have folla'd it, George, and you don't want to be the first to fly in the face of custom.

George

How is Emily?

Mrs. Webb

She hasn't waked up yet. I haven't heard a sound out of her.

George

Emily's *asleep!!!*

Mrs. Webb

No wonder! We were up 'til all hours, sewing and packing. Now I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll go upstairs and see she doesn't come down and surprise you.

Mrs. Webb *exits.*

Mr. Webb

Well, George, how are you?

George

Oh, fine, I'm fine. 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?

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

George

Ye-e-s. I never thought of that. Mr. Webb. A girl's apt to be a mite nervous on her wedding day. 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.

George

But...you believe in it, don't you, Mr. Webb?

Mr. Webb

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. Mr. Webb, how old were you when you got married?

Mr. Webb

Oh, age hasn't much to do with it, George. Not compared with...uh...other things.

George

What were you going to say, Mr. Webb?

Mr. Webb

Oh, I don't know. Was I going to say something?

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.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

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.

Mrs. Webb *enters*.

Mrs. Webb

George, Emily's got to come downstairs and eat her breakfast. She sends you her love but she doesn't want to lay eyes on you. Good-by.

George

Good-by.

George *exits*.

Mr. Webb

Myrtle, I guess you don't know about that older superstition.

Mrs. Webb

What do you mean, Charles?

Mr. Webb

Since the cave men, no bridegroom should see his father-in-law on the day of the wedding, or near it. Now remember that.

Mr, and Mrs. Webb *exit*.

Stage Manager

Now I have to interrupt again here. You see, we want to know how all this began...this plan to spend a lifetime together. You know how it is; you're twenty-one or twenty-two and you make some decisions; then whisssh! you're seventy... you've been a lawyer for fifty years and that white-haired lady at your side has eaten over fifty thousand meals with you. How do such things begin?



## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Stage Manager (*Continued*)

George and Emily are going to show you now the conversation they had when they first knew that...that...as the saying goes...that they were meant for one another. But before they do it I want you to try and remember what it was like to have been very young.

And particularly the days when you were first in love; when you were like a person sleep-walking. You're just a little bit crazy. Will you remember that, please? Now they'll be coming out of high school at three o'clock. George has just been elected President of the Junior Class, and as it's June, that means he'll be President of the Senior Class all next year. And Emily's just been elected Secretary and Treasurer. I don't have to tell you how important that is.

Emily *enters*.

Emily (To off-stage)

I can't, Louise. I've got to go home. Good-bye. Oh, Ernestine! Ernestine! Can you come over tonight and do Latin? Isn't that Cicero the worst thing! Tell your mother you have to. G'by. G'by, Helen. G'by, Fred.

George, *enters*.

George

Can I carry your books home for you, Emily?

Emily (*Coolly*)

Why . . . uh . . . Thank you. It isn't far.

*Silence*

George

I'm awfully glad you were elected, too, Emily.

Emily

Thank you.

George

Emily, why are you mad at me?

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

I'm not mad at you.

George

You've been treating me so funny lately.

Emily

Well, since you ask me, I might as well say it right out, George, I don't like the whole change that's come over you in the last year. I'm sorry if that hurts your feelings, but I've got to—tell the truth and shame the devil.

George

A *change*? Wha...what do you mean?

Emily

Well, up to a year ago I used to like you a lot. And I used to watch you as you did everything...because we'd been friends so long...and then you began spending all your time at baseball...and you never stopped to speak to anybody any more. Not even to your own family you didn't...and, George, it's a fact...you've got awful conceited and stuck-up, and all the girls say so. They may not say so to your face, but that's what they say about you behind your back, and it hurts me to hear them say it; but I've got to agree with them a little. I'm sorry if it hurts your feelings...but I can't be sorry I said it.

George

I...I'm glad you said it, Emily. I never thought that such a thing was happening to me. I guess it's hard for a fella not to have faults creep into his character.

Emily

I always expect a man to be perfect and I think he should be.

George

Oh, I don't think it's possible to be perfect, Emily.

Emily

Well, my father is, and as far as I can see, your father is. There's no reason on earth why you shouldn't be, too.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

George

Well, I feel it's the other way round. That men aren't naturally good; but girls are.

Emily

Well, you might as well know right now that I'm not perfect. It's not as easy for a girl to be perfect as a man, because we girls are more...more...nervous. Now I'm sorry I said all that about you. I don't know what made me say it.

George

Emily...

Emily

Now I can see it's not the truth at all. And I suddenly feel that it isn't important, anyway.

George

Emily...would you like an ice-cream soda, or something, before you go home?

Emily

Well, thank you...I would.

*The Stage Manager, as Mr. Morgan, enters.*

Stage Manager

Hello, George. Hello, Emily. What'll you have? Why, Emily Webb, what you been crying about?

George

She...she just got an awful scare, Mr. Morgan. She almost got run over by that hardware-store wagon. Everybody says that Tom Huckins drives like a crazy man.

Stage Manager

Well, now! You look all shook up. I tell you, you've got to look both ways before you cross Main Street these days. Gets worse every year. What'll you have?

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

I'll have a strawberry phosphate, thank you, Mr. Morgan.

George

No, no, Emily. Have an ice-cream soda with me. Two strawberry ice-cream sodas, Mr. Morgan.

Stage Manager

Two strawberry ice-cream sodas, yes sir. There they are. Enjoy 'em.

The Stage Manager *exits*.

Emily

They're so expensive.

George

No, no. Don't you think of that. We're celebrating our election. And then do you know what else I'm celebrating?

Emily

Nnn-no,

George

I'm celebrating because I've got a friend who tells me all the things that ought to be told me.

Emily

George, please don't think of that. I don't know why I said it. It's not true. You're...

George

No, Emily, you stick to it. I'm glad you spoke to me like you did. But you'll see; I'm going to change so quick; you bet I'm going to change. And, Emily, I want to ask you a favor.

Emily

What?

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

George

Emily, if I go away to State Agriculture College next year, will you write me a letter once in a while?

Emily

I certainly will. I certainly will, George

*Pause.*

It certainly seems like being away three years you'd get out of touch with things. Maybe letters from Grover's Corners wouldn't be so interesting after a while. Grover's Corners isn't a very important place when you think of all New Hampshire; but I think it's a very nice town.

George

The day wouldn't come when I wouldn't want to know everything that's happening here. I know that's true, Emily.

Emily

Well, I'll try to make my letters interesting.

*Pause.*

George

Y'know. Emily, whenever I meet a farmer I ask him if he thinks it's important to go to Agriculture School to be a good farmer.

Emily

Why, George...

George

Yeah, and some of them say that it's even a waste of time. You can get all those things, anyway, out of the pamphlets the government sends out. And Uncle Luke's getting old; he's about ready for me to start in taking over his farm tomorrow, if I could.

Emily

My!

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

George

And, like you say, being gone all that time...in other places and meeting other people. Gosh, if anything like that can happen I don't want to go away. I guess new people aren't any better than old ones. I'll bet they almost never are. Emily ... I feel that you're as good a friend as I've got. I don't need to go and meet the people in other towns.

Emily

But, George, maybe it's very important for you to go and learn all that about cattle judging and soils and those things. Of course, I don't know.

George

Emily, I'm going to make up my mind right now. I won't go. I'll tell Pa about it tonight.

Emily

Why, George, I don't see why you have to decide right now. It's a whole year away.

George

Emily, I'm glad you spoke to me about that...that fault in my character. What you said was right; but there was one thing wrong in it, and that was when you said that for a year I wasn't noticing people, and...you, for instance. Why, you say you were watching me when I did everything...I was doing the same about you all the time. Why, sure, I always thought about you as one of the chief people I thought about. I always made sure where you were sitting on the bleachers, and who you were with, and for three days now I've been trying to walk home with you; but something's always got in the way. Yesterday I was standing over against the wall waiting for you, and you walked home with Miss Corcoran.

Emily

George...Life's awful funny! How could I have known that? Why, I thought...

George

Listen, Emily, I'm going to tell you why I'm not going to Agriculture School. I think that once you've found a person that you're very fond of...I mean a person who's fond of you, too, and likes you enough to be interested in your character...Well, I think that's just as important as college is, and even more so. That's what I think.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

I think it's awfully important, too.

George

Emily.

Emily

Y-yes, George.

George

Emily, if I do improve and make a big change...would you be... I mean: could you be...

Emily

I...I am now; I always have been.

George.

So I guess this is an important talk we've been having.

Emily

Yes...yes.

George

Wait just a minute and I'll walk you home.

*With mounting alarm George digs into his pockets for the money.*

*The Stage Manager enters.*

George

Mr. Morgan, I'll have to go home and get the money to pay you for this. It'll only take me a minute.

Stage Manager  
*(Pretending to be affronted.)*

What's that? George Gibbs, do you mean to tell me...

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

George

Yes, but I had reasons, Mr. Morgan. Look, here's my gold watch to keep until I come back with the money.

Stage Manager

That's all right. Keep your watch. I'll trust you.

George

I'll be back in five minutes.

Stage Manager

I'll trust you ten years, George...not a day over. Got all over your shock, Emily?

Emily

Yes, thank you, Mr. Morgan. It was nothing.

George

I'm ready.

*George and Emily exit in silence.*

*The Stage Manager watches, then turns to the audience.*

Stage Manager

Well. Now we're ready to get on with the wedding.

There are a lot of things to be said about a wedding; there are a lot of thoughts that go on during a wedding. We can't get them all into one wedding, naturally, and especially not into a wedding at Grover's Corners, where they're awfully plain and short.

*Mrs. Webb (To Audience)*

I don't know why on earth I should be crying. I suppose there's nothing to cry about. It came over me at breakfast this morning; there was Emily eating her breakfast as she's done for seventeen years and now she's going off to eat it in someone else's house. Oh, I've got to say it: you know, there's something downright cruel about sending our girls out into marriage this way. I hope some of her girl friends have told her a thing or two. It's cruel, I know, but I couldn't bring myself to say anything. I went into it blind as a bat myself.



## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

George enters center aisle.

*The Choir starts singing "Love Divine, All Love Excelling". George takes a few steps of withdrawal*

Mrs. Gibbs  
(sensing his confusion)

George! George! What's the matter?

George

Ma, I don't want to grow old. Why's everybody pushing me so?

Mrs. Gibbs

Why, George...you wanted it.

George

No, Ma, listen to me...

Mrs. Gibbs

No, no, George...you're a man now.

George

Listen, Ma, for the last time I ask you...all I want to do is to be a fella...

Mrs. Gibbs

George! If anyone should hear you! Now stop. Why, I'm ashamed of you!

George  
*He comes to himself and looks over the scene.*

Where's Emily?

Mrs..Gibbs

George! You gave me such a turn.

George

Cheer up, Ma. I'm getting married.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily, *enters center aisle. She draws back, frightened.*  
*The choir begins: "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds."*

Emily

I never felt so alone in my whole life. And George over there, looking so...I hate him. I wish I were dead. Papa! Papa!

Mr. Webb

Emily! Emily! Now don't get upset,

Emily

But, Papa, I don't want to get married.

Mr. Webb

Shh...shh...Emily. Everything's all right.

Emily

Why can't I stay for a while just as I am? Let's go away.

Mr. Webb

No, no, Emily. Now stop and think a minute.

Emily

Don't you remember that you used to say...all the time you used to say...all the time...that I was your girl! There must be lots of places we can go to.

Mr. Webb

Shh...You mustn't think of such things. You're just nervous, Emily.

Mr. Webb *turns and calls to George.*

George! George!

Mr. Webb *turns back to Emily.*

Why you're marrying the best young fellow in the world. George is a fine fellow.

Emily

But Papa...

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Mr. Webb

I'm giving away my daughter, George. Do you think you can take care of her?

George

Mr. Webb, I want to...I want to try. Emily, I'm going to do my best. I love you, Emily. I need you.

Emily

Well, if you love me, help me. All I want is someone to love me.

George

I will, Emily. Emily, I'll try.

Emily

And I mean forever. Do you hear? Forever and ever.

*The Choir sings The March from Lohengrin .  
The Stage Manager, as Clergyman, stands up center.*

Mr. Webb

Come, they're waiting for us. Now you know it'll be all right. Come, quick.

*George takes his place beside the Stage Manager-Clergyman.  
Emily proceeds up the aisle on Mr. Webb's arm.*

Stage Manager

Do you, George, take this woman, Emily, to be your wedded wife, to have...

*The Stage Manager's words are covered by the sound of the Choir singing.*

George

I do.

Stage Manager

Do you, Emily, take this man, George, to be your wedded husband...

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

*Again, the Stage Manager's words are covered by the Choir singing.  
Emily and George exit the center aisle.*

*The lights dim to black as the Choir's singing fades and eight ladder-back chairs are placed in two openly spaced rows facing the audience. Once they are in place, the actors enter and take their places. The front row contains an empty chair; then Mrs. Gibbs and Simon Stimson. The second row contains Mrs. Soames and Wally Webb.*

*The Stage Manager enters as the lights come up slowly.*

Stage Manager

Nine years have gone by, friends...summer, 1913.

Gradual changes in Grover's Corners. Horses are getting rarer. Farmers coming into town in Fords. Everybody locks their house doors now at night. Ain't been any burglars in town yet, but everybody's heard about 'em.

You'd be surprised, though; on the whole, things don't change much around here.

This is certainly an important part of Grover's Corners. It's on a hilltop...lots of sky, lots of clouds...often lots of sun and moon and stars.

There, quite a ways down, is Grover's Corners. Yes, beautiful spot up here. Mountain laurel and li-lacks. Over there are the old stones; 1670, 1680. Strong-minded people that come a long way to be independent. Over there are some Civil War veterans. New Hampshire boys.

This here is the new part of the cemetery. Here's your friend Mrs. Gibbs. 'N let me see...Here's Mr. Stimson. And Mrs. Soames. Oh, and a lot of others. And Editor Webb's boy, Wallace, whose appendix burst while he was on a Boy Scout trip to Crawford Notch.

Now there are some things we all know, but we don't take 'em out and look at 'em very often. We all know that *something* is eternal...everybody knows in their bones that *something* is eternal, and *that* something has to do with human beings. There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being.

*Pause.*

Well! There are some *living* people. There's Joe Stoddard, our undertaker, supervising a new-made grave. And here comes a Grover's Corners boy that left town to go out West.

**Our Town by Thornton Wilder**

Joe Stoddard *and*, Sam Craig *enter*.

Sam Craig

Good afternoon, Joe Stoddard.

Joe Stoddard

Good afternoon. Let me see now...do I know you?

Sam Craig

I'm Sam Craig.

Joe Stoddard

Gracious sakes' alive! Of all people! I should'a knowed you'd be back for the funeral. You've been away a long time, Sam.

Sam Craig

Yes, I'm in business out in Buffalo now, Joe.

Joe Stoddard

Very sad, our journey today, Samuel.

Sam Craig

Yes.

Joe Stoddard

Yes, yes. I always say I hate to supervise when a young person is taken.

Sam Craig

Why, this is my Aunt Julia...I'd forgotten that she'd...

Joe Stoddard

Yes, Doc Gibbs lost his wife two...three years ago about this time. And today's another pretty bad blow for him, too.

Mrs. Gibbs:  
(*To Simon Stimson*)

That's my sister Carey's boy, Sam...Sam Craig.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Simon Stimson

I'm always uncomfortable when *they're* around.

Mrs. Gibbs

Simon.

Sam Craig

Joe, what did she die of?

Joe Stoddard

Who?

Sam Craig

My cousin.

Joe Stoddard

Oh, didn't you know? Had some trouble bringing a baby into the world. 'Twas her second, though. There's a little boy 'bout four years old.

Sam Craig

The grave's going to be over there?

Joe Stoddard

Yes,

Howie Newsome, Constable Warren, Si Crowell *enter followed by* Dr. Gibbs, George, Mr. Webb *and* Mrs. Webb. All *carry large umbrellas that conceal* Emily.  
*The mourners slowly move down the center aisle.*

Mrs. Soames

Who is it, Julia?

Mrs. Gibbs

My daughter-in-law, Emily Webb.

Mrs. Soames

Well, I declare! The road up here must have been awful muddy. What did she die of, Julia?

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Mrs. Gibbs

In childbirth.

Mrs. Soames

Childbirth. I'd forgotten all about that. My, wasn't life awful...and wonderful.

Simon Stimson

Wonderful, was it?

Mrs. Gibbs

Simon! Now, remember!

*The Choir sings "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds".  
Emily walks slowly to the vacant chair beside Mrs. Gibbs and sits.*

Emily

Hello.

Mrs. Soames

Hello, Emily.

Emily

Hello, Mother Gibbs.

Mrs. Gibbs

Emily.

Emily

It's raining.

*Emily looks at the mourners  
who divide on either side of the graveyard.*

Mrs. Gibbs

Yes. They'll be gone soon, dear. Just rest yourself.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

It seems thousands and thousands of years since I...Papa remembered that that was my favorite hymn. Oh, I wish I'd been here a long time. I don't like being new here...How do you do, Mr. Stimson?

Simon Stimson

How do you do, Emily.

Emily

Mother Gibbs, George and I have made that farm into just the best place you ever saw. We thought of you all the time. We wanted to show you the new barn and a great long cement drinking fountain for the stock. We bought that out of the money you left us.

Mrs. Gibbs

I did?

Emily

Don't you remember, Mother Gibbs...the legacy you left us? Why, it was over three hundred fifty dollars.

Mrs. Gibbs

Yes, yes, Emily.

Emily

Well, there's a patent device on the drinking fountain so that it never overflows, Mother Gibbs, and it never sinks below a certain mark they have there. It's fine.

*Emily's voice trails off as she looks at the mourners.*

It won't be the same to George without me, but it's a lovely farm.

*Emily looks directly at Mrs. Gibbs.*

Live people don't understand, do they?

Mrs. Gibbs

No, dear...not very much.



## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

They're sort of shut up in little boxes, aren't they? I feel as though I knew them last a thousand years ago.

My boy is spending the day with Mrs. Carter.

Mother Gibbs, we have a Ford, too. Never gives any trouble. I don't drive, though.

Mother Gibbs, when does this feeling go away? Of being...one of *them*? How long does it...?

Mrs. Gibbs

Shh! dear. Just wait and be patient.

Emily

I know. Look, they're finished. They're going.

Mrs. Gibbs

Shh—.

*The mourners exit except Dr. Gibbs and George.*

*Dr. Gibbs comes over to Mrs. Gibbs' grave and stands before it a moment.*

*Emily looks up at his face. Mrs. Gibbs does not raise her eyes.*

**Emily**

Look! Father Gibbs is bringing some of my flowers to you. He looks just like George, doesn't he? Oh, Mother Gibbs, I never realized before how troubled and how . . . how in the dark live persons are. Look at him. I loved him so. From morning till night, that's all they are...troubled.

The Dead

*(Talking among themselves)*

Little cooler than it was. Yes, that rain's cooled it off a little. Those northeast winds always do the same thing, don't they? If it isn't a rain, it's a three-day blow.

Emily

But, Mother Gibbs, one can go back; one can go back there again...into living. I feel it. I know it. Why just then for a moment I was thinking about...about the farm...and for a minute I *was* there and...

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Mrs. Gibbs

Yes, of course you can.

Emily

I can go back there and live all those days over again...why not?

Mrs. Gibbs

All I can say is, Emily, don't.

Emily  
(*To the Stage Manager*)

But it's true, isn't it? I can go and live...back there...again.

Stage Manager

Yes, some have tried but they soon come back here.

Mrs. Gibbs

Don't do it, Emily.

Mrs. Soames

Emily, don't. It's not what you think it'd be.

Emily

But I won't live over a sad day. I'll choose a happy one. I'll choose the day I first knew that I loved George. Why should that be painful?

Stage Manager

You not only live it but you watch yourself living it.

Emily

Yes?

Stage Manager

And as you watch it, you see the thing that they, down there, never know. You see the future. You know what's going to happen afterwards.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

But is that...painful? Why?

Mrs. Gibbs

That's not the only reason why you shouldn't do it, Emily. When you've been here longer you'll see that our life here is to forget all that and think only of what's ahead and be ready for what's ahead. When you've been here longer you'll understand.

Emily.

But, Mother Gibbs, how can I *ever* forget that life? It's all I know. It's all I had.

Mrs. Soames

Oh, Emily. It isn't wise. Really, it isn't.

Emily

But it's a thing I must know for myself. I'll choose a happy day, anyway.

Mrs. Gibbs

*No!* At least, choose an unimportant day. Choose the least important day in your life. It will be important enough.

Emily

Then it can't be since I was married or since the baby was born. I can choose a birthday at least, can't I? I choose my twelfth birthday.

Stage Manager

All right. February 11th, 1899. A Tuesday. Do you want any special time of day?

Emily

Oh, I want the whole day.

Stage Manager

We'll begin at dawn.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

There's Main Street...why, that's Mr. Morgan's drugstore before he changed it!  
And there's the livery stable.

Stage Manager

Yes, it's 1899. This is fourteen years ago.

Emily

Oh, that's the town I knew as a little girl. And, *look*, there's the old white fence  
that used to be around our house. Oh, I'd forgotten that! Oh, I love it so!  
Are they inside?

Stage Manager

Yes, your mother'll be coming downstairs in a minute to make breakfast.

Emily

Will she?

Stage Manager

And you remember...your father had been away for several days. He came back  
on the early morning train.

Emily

No.

Stage Manager

He'd been back to his college to make a speech...in western New York, at  
Clinton.

Emily

Look! There's Howie Newsome. There's our policeman. But he's *dead*; he *died*.

*The voices of Howie Newsome, Constable Warren and Joe Crowell, Jr., are  
heard off-stage,*

Howie Newsome (*Off stage*)

Whoa Bessie! 'Morning, Bill.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Constable Warren (*Off Stage*)

Morning, Howie.

Howie Newsome (*Off Stage*)

You're up early.

Constable Warren (*Off Stage*)

Been rescuin' a party; darn near froze to death, down by Polish Town

Emily

Why, there's Joe Crowell. . .

Joe Crowell (*Off Stage*)

Good morning, Mr. Warren. 'Morning, Howie.

Mrs. Webb *enters*.

Mrs. Webb

Children! Wally! Emily! Time to get up.

Emily

Mama, I'm here! Oh! how young Mama looks! I didn't know Mama was ever that young.

Mrs. Webb

You can come and dress by the kitchen fire, if you like. But hurry.

Howie Newsome *enters* .

Mrs. Webb (Continued)

Good morning, Mr. Newsome. Whhhh..it's cold.

Howie Newsome

Ten below by my barn, Mrs. Webb.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Mrs. Webb

Think of it! Keep yourself wrapped up.

Emily

Mama, I can't find my blue hair ribbon anywhere.

Mrs. Webb

Just open your eyes, dear, that's all. I laid it out for you special— on the dresser, there. If it were a snake it would bite you.

Emily

Yes, yes.

Mr. Webb *and* Constable Warren *enter*.

Mr. Webb

Good morning, Bill.

Constable Warren

Good morning, Mr. Webb. You're up early.

Mr. Webb

Yes, just been back to my old college in New York State. Been any trouble here?

Constable Warren

Well, I was called up this mornin' to rescue a Polish fella. Darn near froze to death he was.

Mr. Webb

We must get it in the paper.

Constable Warren *exits*.

Emily  
(*Whispers.*)

Papa.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Mr. Webb

Good morning, Mother.

Mrs. Webb

How did it go, Charles?

Mr. Webb

Oh, fine, I guess. I told'm a few things. Everything all right here?

Mrs. Webb

Yes...can't think of anything that's happened, special. Been right cold.

Mr. Webb

Yes, well, it's colder than that at Hamilton College. Students' ears are falling off. Paper have any mistakes in it?

Mrs. Webb

None that I noticed. Charles! Don't forget; it's Emily's birthday. Did you remember to get her something?

Mr. Webb

Yes, I've got something here.

Mr. Webb *calls upstairs as he exits.*

Where's my girl? Where's my birthday girl?

Mrs. Webb

Don't interrupt her now, Charles. You can see her at breakfast. She's slow enough as it is. Hurry up, children! It's seven o'clock. Now, I don't want to call you again.

Emily

I can't bear it. They're so young and beautiful. Why did they ever have to get old?

Mama, I'm here. I'm grown up. I love you all. Everything. I can't look at everything hard enough. Good morning, Mama.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Mrs. Webb

Well, now, dear, a very happy birthday to my girl and many happy returns. There are some surprises waiting for you on the kitchen table.

Emily

Oh, Mama, you *shouldn't* have.

*Emily looks at the Stage Manager*

Emily (*Continued*)

I can't. I can't.

Mrs. Webb

But birthday or no birthday, I want you to eat your breakfast good and slow. I want you to grow up and be a good strong girl.

That in the blue paper is from your Aunt Carrie; and I reckon you can guess who brought the post-card album. I found it on the doorstep when I brought in the milk...George Gibbs...must have come over in the cold pretty early...right nice of him.

Emily

Oh, George! I'd forgotten that...

Mrs. Webb

Chew that bacon good and slow. It'll help keep you warm on a cold day.

Emily

Oh, Mama, just look at me one minute as though you really saw me. Mama, fourteen years have gone by. I'm dead. You're a grandmother, Mama. I married George Gibbs, Mama. Wally's dead, too. Mama, his appendix burst on a camping trip to North Conway. We felt just terrible about it—don't you remember? But, just for a moment now we're all together. Mama, just for a moment we're happy. *Let's look at one another.*

Mrs. Webb

That in the yellow paper is something I found in the attic among your grandmother's things. You're old enough to wear it now, and I thought you'd like it.



## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

And this is from you. Why, Mama, it's just lovely and it's just what I wanted. It's beautiful!

*Emily flings her arms around her mother's neck.*

Mrs. Webb

Well, I hoped you'd like it. Hunted all over. Your Aunt Norah couldn't find one in Concord, so I had to send all the way to Boston. Wally has something for you, too. He made it at manual-training class and he's very proud of it. Be sure you make a big fuss about it Your father has a surprise for you, too; don't know what it is myself. Shh...here he comes.

Mr. Webb (*off-stage*)

Where's my girl? Where's my birthday girl?

Emily

I can't. I can't go on. It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another.

*Emily breaks down sobbing.*

*Mrs. Webb exits.*

I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. Take me back...up the hill...to my grave. But first: Wait! One more look.

*Looks left and then out past audience and then to the right.*

Good-by, Good-by, world. Good-by, Grover's Corners...Mama and Papa. Good-by to clocks ticking...and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new-ironed dresses and hot baths...and sleeping and waking up. Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you.

*To the Stage Manager*

Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it...every, every minute?

Stage Manager

No.

*Pause*

The saints and poets, maybe—they do some.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

I'm ready to go back.

*Emily returns to her chair beside Mrs. Gibbs.*

Mrs. Gibbs

Were you happy?

Emily

No. I should have listened to you. That's all human beings are! Just blind people.

Mrs. Gibbs

Look, it's clearing up. The stars are coming out.

Emily

Oh, Mr. Stimson, I should have listened to them.

Simon Stimson

Yes, now you know. Now you know! That's what it was to be alive. To move about in a cloud of ignorance; to go up and down trampling on the feelings of those...of those about you. To spend and waste time as though you had a million years. To be always at the mercy of one self-centered passion, or another. Now you know. That's the happy existence you wanted to go back to. Ignorance and blindness.

Mrs. Gibbs

Simon Stimson, that ain't the whole truth and you know it. Emily, look at that star. I forget its name.

Emily

*Looking toward the back of church.*

Mother Gibbs, it's George.

Mrs. Gibbs

Shh, dear. Just rest yourself.

## Our Town by Thornton Wilder

Emily

It's George.

*George comes toward them and sinks to his knees  
then falls full length at Emily's feet.*

Simon Stimson

That ain't no way to behave!

Mrs. Soames

He ought to be home.

Emily

Mother Gibbs?

Mrs. Gibbs

Yes, Emily?

Emily

They don't understand, do they?

Mrs. Gibbs

No, dear. They don't understand.

Stage Manager

Most everybody's asleep in Grover's Corners. There are a few lights on. Shorty Hawkins, down at the depot, has just watched the Albany train go by. And at the livery stable somebody's setting up late and talking. Yes, it's clearing up. There are the stars doing their old, old crisscross journeys in the sky. Scholars haven't settled the matter yet, but they seem to think there are no living beings up there. Just chalk...or fire. Only this one is straining away, straining away all the time to make something of itself. The strain's so bad that every sixteen hours everybody lies down and gets a rest.

Hm...Eleven o'clock in Grover's Corners...You get a good rest, too. Good night.

THE END

## **Our Town by Thornton Wilder**