

GIBBS. I understand you have a room to rent.

(*Martha enters from kitchen. Puts "Lazy Susan" on sideboard, then gets to R. of table.*)

ABBY. Yes. Won't you step in?

GIBBS. (*Stepping into room.*) Are you the lady of the house?

ABBY. Yes, I'm Miss Brewster. And this is my sister, another Miss Brewster.

GIBBS. My name is Gibbs.

ABBY. (*Easing him to chair R. of table.*) Oh, won't you sit down? I'm sorry we were just setting the table for dinner.

MORTIMER. (*Into phone.*) Hello—let me talk to Al again. City desk. (*Loud.*) AL!! CITY DESK! WHAT? I'm sorry, wrong number.

(*He hangs up and starts dialing again as Gibbs looks at him. Gibbs turns to Abby.*)

GIBBS. May I see the room?

MARTHA. (*D. L. of table.*) Why don't you sit down a minute and let's get acquainted.

GIBBS. That won't do much good if I don't like the room.

ABBY. Is Brooklyn your home?

GIBBS. Haven't got a home. Live in a hotel. Don't like it.

MORTIMER. (*Into phone.*) Hello. City desk.

MARTHA. Are your family Brooklyn people?

GIBBS. Haven't got any family.

ABBY. (*Another victim.*) All alone in the world?

GIBBS. Yep.

ABBY. Well, Martha— (*Martha goes happily to sideboard, gets bottle of wine from U. L. cupboard, and a wine glass, and sets them on table, U.S. end. Abby eases Gibbs into chair R. of table and continues speaking to him, then to above table.*) Well, you've come to just the right house. Do sit down.

MORTIMER. (*Into phone.*) Hello, Al? Mort. We got cut off. Al, I can't cover the play tonight—that's all there is to it, I can't!

MARTHA. (*L. of table.*) What church do you go to? There's an Episcopal church practically next door. (*Her gesture toward window brings her to window seat and she sits.*)

GIBBS. I'm Presbyterian. Used to be.

MORTIMER. (*Into phone.*) What's George doing in Bermuda? (*Rises and gets loud.*) Certainly I told him he could go to Bermuda—

it's my department, isn't it? Well, you've got to get somebody. Who else is there around the office? (*He sits on second chair.*)

GIBBS. (*Annoyed. Rises and crosses below table to L. of it.*) Is there always this much noise?

MARTHA. Oh, he doesn't live with us.

(*Abby sits above table.*)

MORTIMER. (*Into phone.*) There must be somebody around the place. Look, Al, how about the office boy? You know the bright one—the one we don't like? Well, you look around the office, I'll hold on.

GIBBS. I'd really like to see the room.

ABBY. (*After seating Gibbs R. of table she has sat in chair above table.*) It's upstairs. Won't you try a glass of our wine before we start up?

GIBBS. Never touch it.

MARTHA. We make this ourselves. It's elderberry wine.

GIBBS. (*To Martha.*) Elderberry wine. Hmmph. Haven't tasted elderberry wine since I was a boy. Thank you. (*He pulls armchair around and sits as Abby uncorks bottle and starts to pour wine.*)

MORTIMER. (*Into phone.*) Well, there must be some printers around. Look, Al, the fellow who sets my copy. He ought to know about what I'd write. His name is Joe. He's the third machine from the left. But, Al, he might turn out to be another Burns Mantle!

GIBBS. (*To Martha.*) Do you have your own elderberry bushes?

MARTHA. No, but the cemetery is full of them.

MORTIMER. (*Rising.*) No, I'm not drinking, but I'm going to start now.

GIBBS. Do you serve meals?

ABBY. We might, but first just see whether you like our wine.

(*Mortimer hangs up, puts phone on top of desk and crosses L. He sees wine on table. Goes to sideboard, gets glass, brings it to table and pours drink. Gibbs has his glass in hand and is getting ready to drink.*)

MARTHA. (*Sees Mortimer pouring wine.*) Mortimer! Eh eh eh! (*Gibbs stops and looks at Martha. Mortimer pays no attention.*) Eh eh eh eh!

(*As Mortimer raises glass to lips with L. hand, Abby reaches up and pulls his arm down.*)

ABBY. Mortimer. Not that. (*Mortimer, still dumb, puts his glass down on table. Then he suddenly sees Gibbs who has just got glass to his lips and is about to drink. He points across table at Gibbs and gives a wild cry. Gibbs looks at him, putting his glass down. Mortimer, still pointing at Gibbs, goes around above table toward him. Gibbs, seeing a madman, rises slowly and backs toward C., then turns and runs for exit R., Mortimer following him. Gibbs opens R. door and Mortimer pushes him out, closing door after him. Then he turns and leans on door in exhausted relief. Meantime, Martha has risen and crossed to below armchair, while Abby has risen and crossed to D. C. [If necessary to cover Gibbs' cross and exit, Mortimer has the following lines... "Get out of here! Do you want to be poisoned? Do you want to be killed? Do you want to be murdered?"] Abby, great disappointment.*) Now you've spoiled everything. (*She goes to sofa and sits.*)

*(Martha sits in armchair. Mortimer crosses to C. and looks from one to the other...then speaks to Abby.)*

MORTIMER. You can't do things like that. I don't know how to explain this to you, but it's not only against the law. It's wrong! (*To Martha.*) It's not a nice thing to do. (*Martha turns away from him as Abby has done in his lines to her.*) People wouldn't understand. (*Points to door after Gibbs.*) He wouldn't understand.

MARTHA. Abby, we shouldn't have told Mortimer!

MORTIMER. What I mean is—well, this has developed into a very bad habit.

ABBY. (*Rises.*) Mortimer, we don't try to stop you from doing things you like to do. I don't see why you should interfere with us.

*(Phone rings. Mortimer answers. Martha rises to below table.)*

MORTIMER. Hello? (*It's Al again.*) All right, I'll see the first act and I'll pan the hell out of it. But look, Al, you've got to do something for me. Get hold of O'Brien—our lawyer, the head of our legal department. Have him meet me at the theatre. Now, don't let me down. OK I'm starting now. (*He hangs up and turns to aunts.*) Look, I've got to go to the theatre. I can't get out of it. But before I go will you promise me something?

MARTHA. (*Crossing to Abby at C.*) We'd have to know what it was first.