

HOME SWEET HOME
A Three Act Comedy

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By Pearle Seitter, Past Matron,
Hamilton Chapter, No. 275,
Hamilton, Missouri.

For two men and eight women. (May be played by 10 women)

Characters:

Samuel Weatherby - the husband.
Maria Weatherby - the wife.
Anna Belle Weatherby - the daughter.
Jerry Weatherby - the son.
Katie - the maid.
Mrs. Henry Whittleworth)
Mrs. Jeremiah Doolittle)
Mrs. Hiram Mattingham) Members of the Bridge Club.
Mrs. John Jacob Blueberry)
Mrs. Keziah Foxworthy)

Time of playing: About 1½ hours.

Costumes and Characteristics:

Samuel is a small wiry man about 50 years of age. He is of the common ordinary type, and wears a plain suit.
Maria is a large woman about 40 years of age. In disposition she is very changeable. At times she is sweet and dignified. At other times, firm and domineering.
Anna Belle is a High School girl about 17 years of age. She wears plain school dresses, and has a peaceful, quiet disposition.
Jerry is about 14 years of age. Carelessly dressed and very loud and boisterous.
Katie is plain and good natured. She wears a servants uniform with apron and cap.
The ladies of the Bridge Club are of the aristocratic type and wear afternoon dresses.

SCENE 1. ACT 1.
Time - 6:30 PM

Dining room of the Weatherby home. It has three doors. One up center leading to bedroom, one at right leading to kitchen, and one at left leading to living room. At right of center door is mirror and below the mirror is shelf for shaving needs, cosmetics, etc. Down center is dining table with dishes and food as left at close of meal. Down left is sewing table and chair. At right of center is a telephone table and chair, with phone and directory on table. A hall tree stands near center door. Other suitable furniture may be used.

At rise of curtain, Mrs. Weatherby is seated in chair reading a magazine. Katie enters right door, goes to table and begins clearing away the dishes.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Looking up from her magazine) Put the butter and cream in the ice box, Katie.

KATIE: Yes ma'am. (Exit right door and returns) The ice is about gone ma'am.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Well, I'll order some more in the morning.

KATIE: Shure, and I'm glad you have your ice delivered. (Picking up bread) Is this all the bread you have on hands, ma'am?

MRS. WEATHERBY: It will be enough for breakfast. I will get some more when I order the groceries in the morning. (Katie exit right door with bread. Returns immediately and continues cleaning table)

KATIE: Shure, ma'am, would you mind telling me, is the delivery man young and hand-

some?

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Looking up from magazine) What difference would that make to you, Katie? I hired you to do my work, not to entertain the ice man or the grocery boy. I'll expect you to attend strictly to your work while you are here, Katie.

KATIE: Yes, ma'am.

MRS. WEATHERBY: How long were you in your last place, Katie?

KATIE: Jest six weeks, ma'am. But I left of me own accord.

MRS. WEATHERBY: That's strange, Katie. What caused you to leave?

KATIE: That woman told me to cook the potatoes with the jackets on, and it was iliven by the clock then, and not a bit of material did she lave with me to make the jackets, so I jest up and left her.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Looks disgusted. Pause) When you have finished the dishes Katie, you can dress a chicken for dinner tomorrow. You'll find it in a box at the back door.

KATIE: Yes, ma'am. (After table is cleared, Katie exit right door. Samuel enters center door with razor and begins process of shaving, loudly clattering brush in mug. He hums "Home Sweet Home". Mrs. Weatherby as she reads, stops occasionally and listens. Finally she gets up and starts toward him.)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Speaking in firm tones) Samuel, I want you to tell me why, in the last few days you have been humming "Home Sweet Home" over and over to yourself. I never knew you to try to sing a note before. What in the world has come over you?

SAMUEL: (Continues shaving) Oh, nuthin' Maria, nuthin', only I like the song.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Well, I like it too - when it's sung, but that hummin'- well, it sounds like you might be hurt inwardly.

SAMUEL: (Laughs) Oh now Maria it don't sound as bad as all that, does it? I should think you'd like to have me sing a little.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Disgustedly) Sing a little! Well if you call that singin'. But I'll give you credit for one thing. You at least select a song that's sentimental. But it's too bad to have anything so sacred butchered up that way. And it's bad enough for me to have to listen to it, but for goodness sake, Samuel, don't sing when anyone's around. (Rises) And another thing, if you want to sing, learn the words. I just can't stand that- (Imitates his humming. Seats herself in chair and begins reading. Phone rings. Both hurry to answer it)

MRS. WEATHERBY: I'll answer that phone. (Samuel reaches phone first, sits down and takes receiver. Mrs. Weatherby returns to chair)

SAMUEL: Hello. (Pause) Yes-yes, this is Samuel. (Pause) Well, glad to hear you Henry. Haven't heard anything from you since last night.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Interrupting him) Last night! Where were you last night?

SAMUEL: (Continues talking) Tonight? Well-er- I'm not sure. (Pause) Oh, just been shavin'. (Pause) Yes, in a few minutes. (Pause) Well, I might. (Pause) Yeah. At three H's. Yeah, if I can manage.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Walks around chair and tries to hear occasionally) Manage what? And what do you mean by 3 H's? It's 4 H's. You ought to know that for Anna Belle belongs to it.

SAMUEL: Wait a minute, Henry. (Turns to Mrs. Weatherby) Marier, if you don't keep still I can't hear a word. (Continues talking over phone) Hello, Henry. Now, what did you say? (Pause) Oh, yes, yes, I will if I can, but I don't know about it. (Pause) Tonight? Well, I'll do my best. Goodbye. (Return to shaving)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Moving quickly toward him and addressing him in very firm tones) Now look here, Samuel Weatherby, what were you and Henry Whittleworth talking about? And what do you think you're going to do tonight? I know what you're going to do. You're going to bed. And another thing Samuel, don't show your ignorance by calling it the 3 H's. Don't you know it's the 4 H Club? Think you ought to know when Anna Belle belongs to it. And besides, they don't meet tonight, and they wouldn't want you if they did. What would a lot of young girls think if two old dejected looking creatures like you and Henry visited their Club? Had you stopped to think of that Samuel?

SAMUEL: (Turning to look at her, with lather on his face) I never said anything about the 4 H Club, Marier. Didn't even think of it. Can't I talk to a neighbor

without you gettin' all riled up and tryin' to make a mountain out of a mole hill.
MRS. WEATHERBY: Well after this don't try to tell any one what you don't tell me.

SAMUEL: (Again faces her while shaving) Well, it wasn't for you to know, Marier.

Can't me and Henry talk about the weather without you buttin' in and gettin' all fussed up?

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Jumps up from her chair) Don't you dare tell me I'm buttin' in, Samuel Weatherby! It's my business to find out what's goin' on in this household. What is the 3 H's? And what were you and Henry talking about? (Pause) Well, you can keep a secret from me if you want to Samuel Weatherby, but you'll be sorry. (Samuel finishes shaving and while Mrs. Weatherby raves on, he takes his paper and sits down in chair at right to read. Mrs. Weatherby paces up and down while she talks, part of the time sobbing and part in anger) Samuel, haven't I been your wedded wife for nearly 20 years? Haven't I cooked three meals a day for you, to say nothing of the dishes I've washed. And haven't you had a clean shirt every day? If you had married some other woman you might have had only one a week and that one not ironed. And I've kept your socks darned, Samuel. (Sobs) Just tell me another woman that has done as much work as I've done. This is the first time in my life I've had a maid and you wouldn't have consented to that, but for once in my life I set my foot down (Stamps foot angrily. Sits down in chair. After a few minutes silence she jumps up and continues) Just tell me another woman that's been half as devoted to her husband as I've been to you. When you fell down stairs that time Samuel, and hurt yourself so bad on the bottom step, didn't I wait on you day after day? And when you had the flu, who else would have bathed your head, and carried you drinks, and waited on you hand and foot every hour in the day like I did? And you repay me now by doing things on the sly, trying to keep things from me. Well I don't want to know! Oh, I never thought it would come to this. (Sits down and sobs for a few minutes, then jumps up and continues while Samuel tries to read, occasionally throwing down paper, jumps up and paces back and forth, then tries to read again) And when you bought me that dress that time, - that bright red trimmed in yellow- most women would have given it away, but no - I went to work and made a rug out of it. (Pause) And every Christmas don't I buy something nice for you? One year I bought you that pretty floor lamp, and another time the overstuffed furniture, and another year a rug, and last year I gave you that lovely set of silverware for you to eat with, and after all that, you won't tell me anything. (Sobs. Pause) Well, you'll not talk to Henry Whittleworth anymore over this phone. That's settled. (Sits down in chair and leans back resolutely. After pause, gets up and continues) Does Sophia Ann know what Henry's talking about and what he's doing? If she don't know now she will know or my name isn't Maria Weatherby! Just wait! I'll take back some sugar that I borrowed and then I'll let the cat out of the bag. See if I don't. And that will be the last of Henry. Other women are not as easy on their men as I am on you, Samuel. You can just count yourself lucky that you got me for a wife. (Samuel throws down paper, gets up and goes to hall rack and gets his hat. Maria jumps up and starts toward him) You needn't get your hat, Samuel. You're not going to leave this house tonight. Didn't you go out last night and didn't get home until 11:30? How much do I get to go? Just four afternoons each week, and then it's only a few hours at the Club. And now of an evening when I can be at home, you want to go galavantin' around someplace. (Firmly) It can't be done Samuel. You can't leave this house tonight or any other night. Now that settles it!

SAMUEL: (Meekly, with hat in hand) Well I was just goin' down to the store to see about sellin' some seed potatoes, Marier.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Who would plant seed potatoes tonight, Samuel? And you don't spell seed potatoes with 3 H's do you?

SAMUEL: (Still standing with hat in hand) Well I wanted to see about ordering a little coal, too.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Coal, Why we already have enough coal to last the rest of the winter and then some. You have no excuse to get out of this house tonight, Samuel, so sit down and forget it. (Samuel takes off coat, hangs hat and coat on hall tree and again sits down to read. Maria after pause continues) And another thing Samuel, I

want to know where you were last night. You told me you were going out to empty the water trough so it wouldn't freeze, and you were gone four whole hours. Did it take you four hours to empty a water trough? Where in the world were you until 11:30? I went out and hunted every place and couldn't find you. You thought I didn't hear you come in but I did. (Sarcastically) The 3 H's must be awful attractive to keep you out so late. Oh you don't need to act so innocent. I heard what you said over the phone. But I'll tell you one thing, Samuel Weatherby, if there's any females mixed up in this, well, I'm telling you right now, you'll never find one any better looking, or one who can stand any higher in society than your own wife, if I do say it myself; and no other woman would put up with all I have to put up with, without a single word.

SAMUEL: Well, All right, Marier, All right. ALL RIGHT!

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Again seats herself in chair) Well ever since I've been your wedded wife Samuel, I've taken awful good care of you, and I'm not going to have you prowlin' around at night with Henry Whittleworth or the 3 H's or any other human except me. Understand? (While Samuel and Mrs. Weatherby have been talking, Anna Belle enters center door up stage, goes to mirror at right, arranges her hair and powders her face. She then crosses stage and sitting down at table begins to study. As Mrs. Weatherby finishes speaking, Anna Belle looks up from her book)

ANNA BELLE: Oh, let him go mother. Dad never gets to go anyplace.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Turning to Anna Belle) You keep still Anna Belle and get your lessons. Haven't I always told you not to interrupt when I'm talking? Your father is not going out tonight and that settles it. (Jerry enters at right crying and limping. He is carelessly dressed in knickers, with blue shirt and cap on side of head. The knees are torn out of clothes and mercurochrome on knees to imitate blood. He has pair of roller skates in his hand and drops them as he enters, limps to chair, crying as he talks)

JERRY: Oh, Mom, I'm jest about killed. Boo, hoo. Look Mom what I did to my knee. Oh my. Oh my.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Jumps up and runs to Jerry and examines knee) How in the world did you do that, Jerry?

JERRY: (Crying loudly) I fell on the walk and I'm about killed. Oh my. Oh my. (Mrs. Weatherby hastens out door at right and returns with wash basin, cloth and salve.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Hold still while I wash it off. I never saw any one like you, Jerry. Why can't you stand up? Another knee torn out of your pants and your stocking, too. How in the world did you come to fall? Couldn't you catch yourself? What in the world did you have the old skates on for anyway? That's all they're good for. To tear knees out of stockings! (Mrs. Weatherby finishes bathing knee and puts on salve. Jerry begins crying loudly)

JERRY: Oh merciful goodness, Mom. Oh my gosh, Mom, that hurts. Oh my. Oh my. Do you reckon I'm goin' to die, Mom?

ANNA BELLE: (looking up from her book) 'Course you're not going to die from a little scratch on your knee. What would you have thought if you had broken your neck?

JERRY: (In anger) Guess I wouldn't have thought anything, old smartie!

SAMUEL: (After nervously looking on, steps closer to look at knee) Don't you think I'd better go down to the store and get some liniment, Marier?

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Turning to Samuel) No indeed, Samuel. If anyone goes after liniment, Anna Belle can go.

ANNA BELLE: (Angrily) No I won't go, Mother. He tied my pajamas in a hard knot this morning and threw them out of the window, and I won't do a thing for him.

SAMUEL: (Meekly) I saw some salve advertised at the drug store today that might help, Marier.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Firmly) Samuel, it don't make any difference how many bones are broken, or how much salve we need, you don't get out of this house tonight. Hear me? (To Jerry) Now it's all fixed. Go to bed and you'll feel better in the morning.

JERRY: (Tries to get up and cries out as if in pain) Oh, Gee whiz, Mom. Oh, by gosh.

I don't believe I can ever go to school in the morning. (Get up with a moan, limps to table, sees a letter which Anna Belle has in her book, snatches it and starts on a limping run. Anna Belle jumps up and starts after him, chasing him around the table.)

ANNA BELLE: Oh, mother, he took something out of my book. (She chases him out center door, comes back, sits down by the table and speaks in angry tones) Wish he had broke his old neck! (Anna Belle resumes study, Mrs. Weatherby returns to her reading, and Samuel again takes newspaper)

SAMUEL: (After short pause) I ought to call Henry and talk to him just a minute.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Call Henry? Well I guess not! You'll not use that phone any more tonight, Samuel Weatherby. And don't stick your nose in that paper so you can't talk to me, either. Samuel, I have something to say to you. Does Sophia Ann know that Henry is going out tonight and does she know that he is stepping out with one of your attractive 3 H's.

SAMUEL: How do I know, Marier? And what difference does it make to you if she does? And anyhow - the 3 H's may mean something in connection with the government. You know Uncle Sam uses lots of letters.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Oh you needn't try to be so innocent, Samuel. And you needn't think I'm jealous either. Why should I be with all my talents? I am not only unusually bright Samuel, but I am very attractive in appearance. Why one of the women at the Club yesterday said I had the most pleasing form she had ever seen.

SAMUEL: (Looking up from his paper) Well it's pleased the dressmaker more than once, Marier.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Yes, and it's going to please her again, Samuel. I must have some new clothes, some new dresses, and a suit, and a hat, and gloves for spring. I just can't get along without them. When I dressed to go down town yesterday I had to wear the same dress I've been wearing for the last two months. I was so mortified when I met some of my friends. Any one that can show off good clothes like I can, certainly ought to have some, so I just walked into the store and bought me a whole new outfit.

SAMUEL: (Throws down newspaper and looks up in surprise) But Marier, where did you get the money?

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Emphatically) Charged it to your account, of course.

SAMUEL: (Jumps up and with hands in pockets, paces the floor) But Marier, there's the coal bill, and the milk bill, and the grocery bill, and the light bill, and the water bill, and now a maid!

MRS. WEATHERBY: Not another word, Samuel Weatherby. For better or for worse. Have you forgotten that? It's a mighty poor husband that can't support as economical a wife as I am.

JERRY: (Peeps out from back center door. Speaks in undertones) Say, Pop! Don't that just make you wish you hadn't get married?

MRS. WEATHERBY: Jerry. Not another word. Go right to bed or you won't have a chance to skate tomorrow. (Jerry exit out same door. Mrs. Weatherby again takes magazine. Samuel settles back in chair and goes to sleep)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (To herself, after pause) Well, now everything is quiet, I'll take my reducing exercises. It's almost too much for me to take them twice a day, but I must have them. (Exit right door and returns with tea towel and wooden rolling pin. On one handle of rolling pin is attached two loops of a small rope about 18 inches long. She places loops over srms so rolling pin hangs in back. Taking tea towel with both hands, she stretches it out and placing it over rolling pin, rolls it back and forth over hips. After a few moments of exercise, she sinks in a chair exhausted. After short pause, Katie enters right door with chicken under her arm)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Looking up in surprise) Katie! What are you bringing that chicken in here for?

KATIE: Well, shure and you told me to dress it and I can't find it's clothes anywhere.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Oh, Katie! Put it back in the box and I'll have it killed in the

morning.

KATIE: Yes, ma'am. (Exit with chicken)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (To herself) Such a girl. It would be easier for me to do my work myself than to teach her. (Begins exercises again, this time placing loops over head and proceeds to reduce stomach and hips. After few moments, Jerry enters through center door dressed in pajamas. He advances to table where Anna Belle is sitting and holds letter up teasingly)

JERRY: Oh, sis, listen here.

The rose is red, the grass is green,
You're the prettiest girl I've ever seen.
The grass is green, the violets blue,
What I'd like to have is a kiss from you.
I wrote this all myself.

LLOYD.

(When Jerry begins to read, Anna Belle places fingers in ears and drops head in book. As he finishes she cries out angrily)

ANNA BELLE: Oh, mother make Jerry stop. He took something that Lloyd gave me at the party. I never can have anything for him. (Jumps up, chases him around table, then resumes seat)

JERRY: (Again stands up before her, holding letter up close to his face with both hands. Speaks in baby tones) You're my ootsie, tootsie little sweetie. All I want is a kiss from you. From little Lloydie and he wrote it all himself. Ha' Ha' Ho' Ho'.

ANNA BELLE: (Jumping up and starting after him) Give me that letter, you good for nothing. (Chases him around table and out the door. She returns by same door and goes to table)

MRS. WEATHERBY: Come, Anna Belle, it's time for you to go to bed. (Anna Belle picks up books and exit left door) And you too, Samuel. (Goes to Samuel, shakes him. Samuel snores on.) Samuel. Samuel. (Shakes him again. He sits up and rubs his eyes) No wonder you are so sleepy. Up last night until 11:30. Suppose it will take several nights to get caught up. (Samuel takes his watch out of pocket and winds it, sits down and takes off his shoes, picks them up and exit slowly out center door. Mrs. Weatherby sinks back in chair exhausted) My, I'm tired. My exercises do tire me so, but I must keep them up. They keep my form so perfect. (Pause) Let's see. 3 H's. It might stand for Health, Home and Happiness. (Looks concerned) It might stand for Hannah, too. But who could the other two be? Well I should worry as long as I have him in bed. (Phone rings. Mrs. Weatherby answers phone. Speaks sweetly) Hello. (Pause) Yes. (Pause) Oh hello, Mrs. Whittleworth. (Pause) No, he didn't. He was so tired. (Pause) Yes. (Pause) No, he's in bed asleep. (Pause) Yes, he was out last night. (Pause) Not until 11:30. (Pause) Yes he was working on his books. (Pause) Yes. I did. (Pause) Yes I wondered what the letters stood for. It must be something about the government. (Pause) Yes. (Pause) Oh, I never worry about Samuel. He's such a home body. (Pause) Yes. (Pause) Well be sure to come to the Club tomorrow night. Glad you called. (Pause) Goodbye. (Hangs up receiver and as she sits in study, her expression changes to anger) The lobster! If he's stepping out on me it's just too bad for his hide. (Pounds table with fist) I'll see this thing through or my name isn't Maria Weatherby. (Rises, tiptoes to door at center back, opens it and exit. Returns immediately with Samuel's trousers, searches the pockets, takes out money, and with trousers in hand, exit on tip toe through center door).

Curtain.

SCENE II, ACT II

Time: 7:30 PM the following evening.

Living room of Weatherby home. It has three doors. One up center, leading to hall one at right leading to dining room, and one at left to outside entrance. At left

of center door is open stairway. Near foot of stairs is telephone. At right up stage is arm chair and small table and at left of arm chair is lighted floor lamp. At left of center door is davenport with pillows. The room may contain other living room furniture. Two bridge tables are in center front as curtain rises. Katie is arranging covers on tables. Samuel is reclining on davenport, reading. Mrs. Weatherby enters center door. She is dressed in afternoon dress. She carries small tray with tally cards, advances to tables and glances over them.

MRS. WEATHERBY: That will do for now, Katie. I think the tables are ready. You may go to the kitchen now until time for the guests to arrive, then you may answer the door and as the guests enter, I want you to take their wraps to the bed room. Be sure to have the tea and cakes ready when I ring for you, and for goodness sake, Katie, don't forget what I told you about serving.

KATIE: Yes, ma'am. (Exit door at right)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Turns to Samuel who is reading) Samuel, I bought a load of wood today and had it put in the basement. You can take the saw and go to work on it.

SAMUEL: Tonight?

MRS. WEATHERBY: That's what I said.

SAMUEL: But Marier, the ladies will be here and the noise of my sawin' will disturb them. Anyway, Marier, I thought I'd just walk down to the store a minute.

MRS. WEATHERBY: So I thought. That's why I bought the wood. I didn't want you to complain of nothing to do. I promised to take care of you Samuel, and I'm not letting you risk your good name by any of the 3 H's, Hilda, or Hannah or whoever she may be. If Henry Whittleworth wants to, it's all right with me, but not you, Samuel.

SAMUEL: But I told you Marier the 3 H's didn't stand for women's names.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Why don't you tell me what it does stand for then. You go right to the basement, Samuel, then I'll know where you are when the ladies are here.

SAMUEL: (Lays down paper, gets up and starts to door at right) All right, Marier, but-

MRS. WEATHERBY: But what-

SAMUEL: You needn't be surprised if I don't saw much wood.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Well I'll at least know where you are when the ladies are here.

(Anna has entered center door while they have been talking)

ANNA BELLE: I'm going upstairs to study tonight mother, so the ladies won't disturb me.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Very well, Anna Belle. (Anna Belle exit up open stairs, Jerry enters through right door. He is slouchily dressed and is leading a dog. Mrs. Weatherby faces him.) And Jerry, you must go upstairs too. I never can tell just what you are going to say when the ladies are here. It's a little early for you to go to bed but you can play in your room.

JERRY: Can I take Sport with me Mom?

MRS. WEATHERBY: Well- I guess so, this time. But don't let that dog get up on the bed.

JERRY: O. K. (Exit with dog up open stairs)

(Mrs. Weatherby takes final look at tables as door bell rings. She glances around hurriedly, rushes to door at right, calling in loud whisper) Katie! Katie! (Katie enters on run, rushes across stage to door on left and opens door for ladies to enter. Mrs. Doolittle, Mrs. Mattingham, and Mrs. Blueberry enter. Mrs. Weatherby hastens to greet them)

MRS. WEATHERBY: Good evening ladies. I am so delighted to see you. (Shakes hands with ladies and they return greetings. Katie takes wraps and exit center door down stage) Just have chairs. I shall give you your tallie cards and you can find your places. (Get tallies and each lady takes one and finds seat. If two tables are used, Mrs. Doolittle is seated at back of table at right. Mrs. Mattingham at right of left table, and Mrs. Blueberry at left of left table. As the ladies are seated, door bell rings. Katie enters center door up stage, crosses to outer door and opens it. Enter Mrs. Foxworthy and Mrs. Whittleworth. Mrs. Whittleworth carries a Secretaries book under her arm and looks quite stern. Mrs. Weatherby greets them. Katie takes wraps and exit center door up stage. They are given

tallies and find seats, greeting the ladies who are seated. Mrs. Foxworthy is seated at left of right table and Mrs. Whittleworth at back of left table. All turn chairs slightly to face audience. Mrs. Weatherby is seated at left.

MRS. WEATHERBY: It has been such a delightful day.

MRS. BLUEBERRY: Yes, and such lovely evenings. I'm so glad we have decided to meet in the evenings. I do so love to play bridge.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: Yes, indeed. I was just telling my husband this evening when he started to the office, that I wouldn't miss any of our Club meetings for anything.

MRS. BLUEBERRY: I think if business keeps improving as it has during the last few weeks, we shall have to continue our night clubs. Why my husband has had to go back to his work almost every evening for the past few weeks. And he does so hate to be away from home.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Very sweetly) That's just the way with Samuel. He just dreads to go out in the evening without me. We are so devoted to each other.

JERRY: (Calling loudly from up stairs) Hey, Mom. Where in thunder are my pajamas?

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Embarrassed, jumps up, goes to stairs, and speaks in low tones) Jerry, get your clean ones out of the drawer and keep still. (Ladies look at each other and smile. Mrs. Weatherby again seats herself in arm chair)

MRS. DOOLITTLE: I feel so sorry for anyone who has a night hawk for a husband. Jeremiah does hate to be away from home at night, and he has to go to the store almost every evening. He has been there every evening for the past two weeks, and sometimes he almost sheds tears when he leaves me. (Sobs) Just think of him having to work until 11:30 or 12:00 almost every night.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: Well it was almost 12 last night when Hiram got home, and he was so tired. I wish his work wasn't quite so strenuous.
(Jerry is heard pounding on door up stairs)

JERRY: (Voice upstairs) Hey, sis. Ain't you ever goin' to come out of that bathroom? (Mrs. Weatherby with a sigh starts to rise, then sinks back in chair. Ladies smile and Mrs. Doolittle opens her purse to take out handkerchief. A paper drops out of her purse on the floor. Mrs. Foxworthy picks it up, opens and glances over it. Hands it to Mrs. Doolittle)

MRS. FOXWORTHY: Here is a paper that fell out of your purse.

MRS. DOOLITTLE: (Takes paper and starts to fold it up) Oh thanks. It's just a song that I found in my husband's pocket last night. I always go through his pockets every night after he is asleep and take out all the change, so his pockets won't bulge out and spoil the shape of his trousers, and last night I found this song.
(Holds up song)

JERRY: (On stairs in pajamas) Say, mom, come quick and see how cute Sport looks in between the sheets. (Mrs. Weatherby starts to rise, then sinks back with a moan. Ladies exchange smiles)

MRS. BLUEBERRY: Speaking of the song, Mrs. Doolittle, won't you sing it for us?

MRS. DOOLITTLE: I'm not sure that I can. It's so pathetic. I can scarcely keep back the tears when I read it. (Wipes eyes)

MRS. FOXWORTHY: Is it a funeral song?

MRS. DOOLITTLE: Oh no. But I just feel so sorry for any husband who could write such a song.

MRS. FOXWORTHY: Oh sing it Isabella, while we are waiting for the other ladies to come.

MRS. BLUEBERRY: Oh yes Mrs. Doolittle do sing it.

KATIE: (Rushing in very much excited from door at right) Oh Mrs. Weatherby, that man Samuel of yours has jumped out the basement window and gone beatin' it up the ally his best.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Starts up quickly, then calms herself) Oh don't be alarmed, Katie. He must have been going to the office and thought he was late.

KATIE: But I shure heard you tellin' him ma'am, not to lave that basement tonight.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Oh, I was just joking, Katie. Mr. Weatherby understands me perfectly. Go back to the kitchen, Katie, until I ring for you.

KATIE: (Exit right door muttering) Shure and I niver saw the likes of it.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Now Mrs. Doolittle, do sing the song for us. Perhaps we won't be interrupted again.

MRS. DOOLITTLE: Well, I'll try it. It's a parody on Home Sweet Home.

(Sings song. Other ladies look sad and sob occasionally)

Tune: - Home Sweet Home.

Through all of the seasons we often do roam
Because we do find there's no pleasure at home.
When wifey begins with a sigh on her face
It gives us a warning to seek a safe place.

Chorus: Home, home sweetless home,
There's no peace at home,
There's no peace at home.

To marry a wife makes our troubles begin,
And down on our head comes the old rolling pin,
We find ourselves broke at the morning's first light
For wifey's been through all our pockets at night.
Chorus.

We hear her shrill voice whenever we're in sight
And feel her cold feet on our back every night.
Oh wives are a joke even when at their best
Oh give us the jail as our haven of rest.
Chorus.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: (Jumping up and sobbing) It's so pathetic.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: (Jumping up and pounding the table) Pathetic! I tell you that's it. That's it!

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Jumping up) What's it? Sophia Ann, what is the matter.

OTHER LADIES: (In surprise) What is it? Do tell us.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: (Again pounding table) I tell you that's it. That's their theme song.

MRS. BLUEBERRY: Theme song. What do you mean?

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: I mean just this. It's the theme song for our husbands new Club. Your husband and mine.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Sophia Ann. What do you mean. We don't understand.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: (Emphatically) I mean just this! Our husbands are not at work in their offices and places of business as they have tried to make us believe. They have organized a new Club. The I. O. H. H.

ALL THE LADIES: What do you mean! A new Club. Not my husband!

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Well, I'll just show you. Then I guess you'll believe it. I've got the whole thing in black and white. (Picks up Secretary's book and shakes it) And where do you think they have their Club room? (Pause) In the city jail!

ALL: What!

MRS. MATTINGHAM: Oh, Mrs. Whittleworth, you're mistaken. My husband doesn't belong.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Well, here it is. See for yourselves.

MRS. FOXWORTHY: How did you find out, Sophia Ann?

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: (Sits down in chair) Well, you see Henry has been going down town every night for several weeks. Said he was going to do some extra work at the office, his business was so rushing, and he never got home until so late. And last night he talked to Samuel over the phone, and said something about the 3 H's and I smelled a mouse right away. He tried every way to get down town last night but my mind was set, and he didn't get out. (Pounds table. Other ladies nod heads occasionally with set lips) Well, I was determined that I would know the worst, come what would. I have always heard that when a person is sound asleep, if you'll put their feet in cold water, they'll tell you every thing. Well, last night I tried it. After Henry went to sleep I got the foot tub and some ice water, and stuck his feet in and he told me every thing. (Ladies all move up with keen inter-

est) He said they had organized a new Club. The I. O. H. H. He said the Secretary's book was in the secret chamber of the dog house. He knew I had never had the heart to go near that dog house since poor Fido died. (Sobs) Well, it was midnight, but I wasn't to be outdone. I went right straight to that dog house and there above the rafters, I found this,- the book of their organization. Here it is. You can believe it or not. I'll just read it to you. (She reads slowly and with great emphasis while other ladies listen in astonishment)

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE I. O. H. H.

Article I.

This organization shall be known as the Independent Order of Henpecked Husbands.

Article II.

The meeting place shall be the city jail, the only place where members can be locked in and not be disturbed by their wives.

Article III.

The place of meeting shall be called the 3 H's. Henpecked Husband's Haven. (Mrs. Weatherby sinks back in chair muttering, "Henpecked Husband's Haven")

Article IV.

The time of meeting shall be every evening promptly at 8 o'clock when the doors will be locked by the city marshal.

Article V.

The purpose of this meeting shall be to seek shelter for a few hours from nagging wives.

Article VI.

The officers shall be President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Guard.

Article VII.

The Guard shall be the city marshal, whose duty shall be to lock the jail every night promptly at 8 o'clock and guard it from female intruders, during the hours of meeting.

Article VIII.

The membership shall include all husbands who cannot find peace at home.

Article IX.

No member shall be forced to pay dues as henpecked husbands are usually broke.

Article X.

Any member who succeeds in finding peace and tranquillity within the walls of his own home shall hereby cease to be a member.

Article XI.

The theme song of this organization shall be a parody on Home Sweet Home, written by Jeremiah Doolittle.

(Mrs. Doolittle faints.)

MRS. WEATHERBY: 3 H's. Henpecked Husband's Haven. (Sinks in chair with sigh)

MRS. MATTINGHAM: What is a haven?

MRS. FOXWORTHY: Why Cynthia Ann, it's a place of rest. Haven't you ever heard the song about the Haven of Rest?

MRS. MATTINGHAM: Well upon my word! Whose husband can find rest in a jail?

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Yours, Mrs. Mattingham, for one.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: No, not Hiram. I can't believe it.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: (Shows her the book) Here's his name. Hiram Mattingham. (Mrs.

Mattingham looks at name and faints. Other ladies rush to the ones that faint and fan them until they are revived)

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Now I think I had better read the membership. Here it is: Jeremiah Doolittle, President. (Mrs. Doolittle utters "Jeremiah" and faints again) (When excitement is over Mrs. Whittleworth continues:

Hiram Mattingham, Vice President.

Henry Whittleworth, Secretary, Treasurer. (Shows anger when his name is read)

John Jacob Blueberry. (Mrs. Blueberry sobs)

Samuel Weatherby. (Mrs. Weatherby jumps up then sinks in chair. After pause Mrs. Whittleworth jumps up and again pounds the table)

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Come, snap out of it. We can't let them get ahead of us. They will miss this book and then it will be just too bad for us. We have no time to lose. Let's get some weapons and go down to the jail and put Marshal Kincaid to flight. We can then hide outside and pounce on our husbands when they come along.

MRS. WEATHERBY: I have plenty of weapons. I'll get them while you get your wraps. (Rushes out right door. Other ladies with exception of Mrs. Foxworthy, rush out center back door. Mrs. Foxworthy picks up Secretary's book and glances over pages. Mrs. Weatherby enters right door about the same time as other ladies enter from back center door. Mrs. Weatherby carries a rolling pin, broom, poker, skillet, and other utensils if desired. The ladies are hurriedly putting on wraps)

MRS. WEATHERBY: Here's the rolling pin, and the poker, and the skillet, and the shovel, and here's the umbrella. (Ladies grab for weapons. Mrs. Blueberry gets skillet, Mrs. Doolittle, the rolling pin. Other ladies take other weapons)

MRS. BLUEBERRY: (Holding up skillet) This ought to lay somebody's husband out.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: (Grabs for skillet) Oh, don't hit Hiram with that skillet. I couldn't bear to have any other woman hit him. (Sobs)

MRS. DOOLITTLE: And please don't any one hit Jeremiah. I'm always so careful of him. He always says my hands look so cunning on the rolling pin. (Sobs)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Much concerned) Well I hope you won't hit Samuel either. He's so frail and delicate. Now I have a right to hit him if I want to, but I just dare anyone else to hit him.

MRS. FOXWORTHY: Well who are you going to hit if you can't hit anyone's husband? I tell you, you can never win your husbands back with these tools of warfare. It won't work. I know for I've tried it. I've had three husbands, and I lost every one because I ruled with an iron hand.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Then how can we rule them?

MRS. FOXWORTHY: With the hand of love. I tell you it's the only way.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: You may be right, but I don't know what I'll do with Henry at home if I ever give in.

MRS. FOXWORTHY: Well you'll find out it works. Don't you remember the old story in our readers about the sun and the wind? Just try ruling your husbands with the hand of love. Now just sit down and keep calm and I'll tell you my experience. (Ladies take chairs each holding her weapon) Now there was Obediah, my first husband. I drove him away, naggin' about his pipe, and he left me to smoke in peace. There was Josiah, he was a good old soul, but he would drink out of his saucer and clatter his false teeth. Well, the rolling pin finally came between us. And there was John, my last husband. He would spill ashes on the floor every time he took them up. I tried the poker, and the shovel and the skillet on him to break him of this habit but it did no good, and when we buried him (Sobs) the last thing the preacher said was, "ashes to ashes". (Sobs loudly) I tell you there is no other was but love. There is no other way.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: You think I'll ever give up to Henry? Never!

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Jumping up) And I'll never give up to Samuel either!

MRS. FOXWORTHY: I tell you, you must. It's the only way. Lay down your weapons of warfare and go forth to conquer with love. If you don't, you'll break up your homes. There's fire in a man's eye when he seeks the jail for refuge. They've come to the last straw.

MRS. BLUEBERRY: I believe Mrs. Foxworthy is right. Perhaps we have been too severe

with our husbands. Didn't we promise to love and honor them? Let's take her advice and try it out. Let's throw down our weapons and approach the jail in a spirit of love.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: We can try it but it won't have any effect on Henry.

MRS. BLUEBERRY: (Stands and lays weapon on table) Well what we do, we must do at once. It's only a short time until 8 o'clock and then the doors will be closed. We must think fast.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Laying weapons on table) I hate to give in, but if we must, let's do it right. Why not go to the jail and sing Home Sweet Home as it should be sung. That ought to heap coals of fire on their heads.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Do we all know it. Lets try it and see. (All stand and sing first verse of Home Sweet Home)

MRS. BLUEBERRY: (Looking at her watch) We have just 10 minutes left. Why not sing the last verse as we go. (Exit left door singing last verse)
(Curtain falls as music fades)

SCENE III. ACT III.

Time 3:30 PM.

The living room of Weatherby's home on the following afternoon. The room is furnished as in Scene II, but card tables removed. Davenport moved up stage facing audience. Ladies with exception of Mrs. Weatherby wear street dresses. As curtain rises, Mrs. Weatherby, wearing a neat house dress is seated in arm chair at right of stage. She is in deep thought. After few moments silence, she speaks aloud to herself.

MRS. WEATHERBY: I just can't understand it. I've tried all day to find out something, but I've failed. Sometimes I think Samuel acts as if he's ashamed, and then again I think he doesn't. I fully expected when he got up this morning that he would almost get down on his knees and ask my forgiveness, but he didn't say a word. He didn't even act as if he wanted to say anything. (Pause) I wish we hadn't been late getting to the jail last night. If we had just taken the weapons as I wanted to we would have made it on time. (Pause) Win a husband with Home Sweet Home! What do they care if a home is sweet or not? Rather go to a jail! If we had just come back when we found the doors locked, but no! We must sing! Well, I'll never own up to Samuel that I was in the crowd. (Pause) I wonder if the other ladies found out anything. I'll have to find out. I can't stand this any longer. (Goes to phone and takes down receiver) Main 1716 please. (Pause) Hello. Mrs. Whittleworth. Well-er-are you busy this afternoon? (Pause) I just wondered- have you heard anything? (Pause) Yes. (Pause) No, I haven't. (Pause) No, he didn't say a word. (Pause) Yes, it's strange to me too. (Pause) You're coming right over? That's fine. (Pause) Yes. Goodby. (Goes back to arm chair) Well, I'll at least find out if Henry said anything to her. I never knew men to be so dumb. I know they heard us. (Pause) Why didn't they say if we sang well or not? (Pause) Oh well! (Anna Belle enters center door with books in hand, and places them on the table)

ANNA BELLE: Mother, exams are over and I'm glad. I'm going back now for assembly. (Takes vanity case out of pocket, powders nose and arranges hair) And after assembly, I'm going down to Marjory's to practice for the recital. I guess it was just as well I didn't go last night. She said there was so much excitement we couldn't have practiced if I had been there. You know they live just around the corner from the city hall, and she said there were three hobos arrested last night for disturbing the peace, and were put in jail. She said they were regular outlaws and had to be handcuffed. Chief Kincaid said they had just succeeded in getting them quieted down when some women came to the jail and began singing Home Sweet Home. (Mrs. Weatherby is startled) And Chief said if he had of had an extra cell he would have locked the women up too. Who do you suppose those women were mother, and what did it all mean? (Thoughtfully) You know it was quite a coincidence mother. When I was studying last night (Sits down on davenport) I must have fallen asleep for I dreamed I heard the women of your Club singing Home Sweet Home,

and then the music just died away. Wasn't that strange, mother?

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Very nervously) Well I don't know, Anna Belle, we do strange things sometimes. But I certainly wouldn't connect a dream with a lot of gossip if I were you.

ANNA BELLE: (Jumps up laughing) Oh, I'll not worry about it, not at all. I'm off for assembly. Goodbye.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Goodbye dear. (Anna Belle exit door at left) Well of all things! (Jumps up paces floor, wringing hands) Singing to hobos! Where were our husbands? Where was Samuel? Oh, if they ever find out! My social career! I'm ruined! (Hysterically) Oh, this is terrible! What shall I do! What shall I do!

(Door bell rings. Mrs. Weatherby instantly stops raving, tiptoes to door and opens it cautiously)

MRS. WEATHERBY: Oh Sophia Ann, I'm so glad to see you. Come in and sit down. I have something to say to you. (Both are seated) Have you heard the latest? (Jumps up and speaks sarcastically, and with force) You, MRS. HENRY WHITTLEWORTH, and I - MRS. SAMUEL WEATHERBY cultured refined ladies, singing Home Sweet Home to tramps in the city jail! (Wringing her hands and weeping) I tell you Sophia Ann, if anyone find this out were ruined forever!

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: (Jumps up in excitement) Maria Weatherby! What in the world are you talking about? Singing to tramps? Who sang to tramps? Maria, are you crazy?

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Sinking in chair) Not yet, Sophia Ann! Not yet! But wait until you hear. I tell you Sophia Ann, were ruined forever!

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: What is it, Maria? You must explain. Who will be ruined? Who sang to tramps? Maria, you must tell me.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Well sit down, Sophia Ann, and I'll tell you. I didn't know a thing about it until this afternoon. Anna Belle came home a few minutes ago and said there was so much excitement at the city hall last night because some women came down to the jail and sang "Home Sweet Home" to some outlaws that had just been locked up for disturbing the peace. I tell you Sophia Ann, if anyone finds out who it was, we are ruined forever.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: (Jumping up) Sang to outlaws! Did we do a thing like that? Where was Henry? Where was your husband? Why didn't they meet there? Do tell me Maria. I must know the worst.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Well the Lord only knows the worst, Sophia Ann. But come what will, (Angrily) if Samuel ever mentions this to me- well- there'll be only one more song for him.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: (Angrily) Yes, and if Henry finds it out- what I'll do to him won't be slow. (Door bell rings)

MRS. WEATHERBY: I wonder who that can be. (Goes to door and opens it cautiously) Why how do you do, ladies. Come in. We are so anxious to see you. (Mrs. Mattingham and Mrs. Blueberry enter looking very angry)

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: (Rising and addressing ladies) So you have heard it too.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: (Very angry) Yes indeed we have heard it, and we've come to tell you that we weren't guilty of wanting to do such a thing.

MRS. DOOLITTLE: No, nor I either. Poor Jeremiah! I might have known there was some mistake, and that he would never think of going to a jail. And now- what will he think of me? (Sinks in chair and sobs)

MRS. WEATHERBY: Well don't come here and jump on me. I told you it would never work with Samuel.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: And I told you it would never work with Henry either.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: Well, Mrs. Whittleworth, if you hadn't been so snoop and put your husband's feet in cold water and found that book, this wouldn't have happened.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Huh! Snoop am I? Well I didn't faint and fall over when my husband's name was mentioned, did I?

MRS. WEATHERBY: Well, for one, I think every woman knows best how to manage her own husband. There is no one living who can tell me anything about managing Samuel.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Well, if it hadn't been for that sister that lost three husbands, we wouldn't have gotten into this. That old story of hers about the sun and the

wind may take the coat off of some backs but it won't work with husbands. No wonder she lost three of them. I've lived with Henry Whittleworth for 13 years and it takes more wind than sunshine to manage him.

MRS. DOOLITTLE: Well, if you hadn't made me sing that song, all this wouldn't have happened. I didn't want to sing it, but oh yes, I must sing!

MRS. WEATHERBY: Your singing was all right only - it would perhaps have been more appropriate if you had sang- "A Shelter in the Time of Storm" or "Let the Lower Lights be Burning" or something else- anything but "Home Sweet Home".

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: It wasn't my idea to sing that song. If we had taken the weapons as I wanted to we would have found our husbands- or else. And as to that song- I wipe my hands of the whole affair.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: Oh, yes, you will, will you? Well you were just as keen to sing that song as the rest of us, and if I remember right it was you who pitched the tune.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Oh, I did, did I? Well you helped to carry it didn't you?

MRS. WEATHERBY: Now don't quarrel about it. We've got into this. Now we've got to get out. Let's just sit down and think it over. (Ladies take chairs) Now there are two things we must do. We must find out just where our husbands were last night, and we must never let anyone know that we were the ones who were singing down at the jail.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: If Henry ever mentions this to me- (She shakes fist. Door bell rings, and ladies move nervously in chairs. Mrs. Weatherby goes to door and opens it cautiously)

MRS. WEATHERBY: Oh, Mrs. Blueberry, I'm glad it's you. (Mrs. Blueberry enters with letter in hand and is sobbing)

MRS. BLUEBERRY: Oh, Mrs. Weatherby, what in the world are we going to do? (Sees other ladies) Oh, I'm so glad you're all here. You must know the worst. (Ladies look at each other in astonishment)

MRS. WEATHERBY: Do sit down, Mrs. Blueberry, you are all trembly. (Leads her to a chair. She sits down and continues sobbing) Now tell us what you know.

MRS. BLUEBERRY: Oh, I don't know what I'm going to do. Mr. Blueberry came home last night and said the town was just wild about some women who sang at the jail last night. I tried to let on like I knew nothing about it. Then when we sat down to dinner, he slipped this under my plate. Oh, I was so humiliated. (Mrs. Weatherby quickly takes the letter. Mrs. Blueberry covers her face with her hands and sobs loudly. Ladies rush to Mrs. Weatherby's side in excitement. She opens letter)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Reading letter aloud) The husbands of the best wives in the world invite you to a play, "Home Sweet Home". (All look at each other in amazement. Mrs. Mattingham and Mrs. Doolittle are overcome and sink in chairs. Mrs. Weatherby continues to read) given in your honor at the town Hall Thursday evening at 8 o'clock. (All sink in chairs and for a few moments are quiet)

MRS. BLUEBERRY: Now we know where our husbands were. Practicing for that play, but how can we explain to them?

MRS. MATTINGHAM: Oh, I never should have mistrusted Hiram. (Sobs)

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: And if I hadn't made that water ice cold, maybe Henry would never have told me where to find that book.

MRS. WEATHERBY: I never thought of Samuel in a play. Poor dear! I hope he has his part well.

MRS. DOOLITTLE: (Sobbing) I wonder if Jeremiah will try to sing that song. He used to be a pretty good singer, but of late years his voice is terribly cracked.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: But do we know we'll be invited? I haven't received my invitation.

MRS. BLUEBERRY: Yes, you will each get one, but they were not supposed to be given out until tomorrow, but Mr. Blueberry just couldn't keep the secret any longer.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: That must have been my invitation that Henry slipped under the sugar bowl at lunch, and he acted so queer I was afraid to open it. I didn't know if it was something about the jail, or the bill for my new suit. I was just dying to see what was in it, but he never left the house, and I wouldn't give him

the satisfaction of knowing that I saw it. But I know now it was my invitation. Perhaps I was rather hasty, but no husband is going to step out on me.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: I'm sure I'll soon get mine. (Proudly) Hiram never keeps a secret from me.

MRS. DOOLITTLE: That's just the way with Jeremiah. He's always so thoughtful.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Whatever comes we must never own up that we sang at the jail. That would ruin us forever. But Samuel won't ask me about it. He knows he won't dare. (Enter Anna Belle center door)

ANNA BELLE: Hello, Mother. And all you other ladies. Congratulations!

ALL: (In astonishment) Congratulations? What for?

ANNA BELLE: Oh, you needn't act so innocent. Mr. Allison told us all about it in assembly this morning.

LADIES: (Looking puzzled) What is it? About what? Do tell us.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Anna Belle, we don't understand. Do tell us.

ANNA BELLE: (Very much excited) He said there were three convicts arrested here last night for disturbing the peace, and they were locked in the city jail. He said they were desperate and had to be handcuffed. Well, he said just a short time after they were put in jail, some women came and sang "Home Sweet Home", and these men who were hardened criminals really broke down and cried. Why, the Marshal said there wasn't a dry eye in the jail. (Ladies exchange glances and look puzzled) And when they let them out of the jail this morning, those men were still weeping, and said they were going right out to hunt work, and all three of them promised to go back and make a home for their family. Mr. Allison said the city council was going to find out what Club had done such a wonderful thing, and said he hoped it would soon become a national organization. And mother, I was so terribly excited about having such an organization originate in our town, and while he was talking it came to me about that song last night that I thought was a dream, and mother, before I knew it, I stood right up and said, "It was my Mother's Bridge Club, and my mother was one of them." Oh, mother, I was so proud of you. (Ladies look at each other in amazement)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Trying to be calm) Well, Anna Belle, we really didn't intend for anyone to know that we were the ones who sang, but we did think at the time that it was necessary thing to do.

ANNA BELLE: But why did you want to keep it a secret, Mother?

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Very sweetly) You know, Anna Belle, the Bible says "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth". All the ladies of our Club are so conscientious about their good deeds, and of course when we went to the jail last night we had only this thought in view- that those who were locked inside had wives, you know. (Ladies begin to feel easy and exchange pleased glances)

ANNA BELLE: Well, you certainly put one over last night. I must hurry and tell Dad. (Exit door at right. Jerry enters center door whistling with cap on and letter in hand)

JERRY: Here, Mom. (Sees ladies) Howdy. Mom, here's a letter Pop said to give to you. It says (Holds it up and reads aloud) To the sweetest wife in the world. I asked Pop who that was for, and he said it was for you. Lets see what's in it, Mom.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Takes letter) Thank you Jerry. It's just an invitation to the play. Your dear father never forgets me. (Jerry seats himself in chair at right and bounces ball)

MRS. MATTINGHAM: I must go home at once. Poor Hiram will wonder why I didn't open my invitation. (Rises and starts to door at left)

MRS. DOOLITTLE: And I must look for my invitation, too. I saw Jeremiah have it when he was washing dishes, but I don't know what he did with it. (All ladies rise and to to door at left)

MRS. WEATHERBY: I wish you wouldn't all leave at once. This has been a wonderful surprise party.

MRS. MATTINGHAM: I don't think we need to tell our husbands how surprised we really are.

MRS. WHITTLEWORTH: Don't worry about me telling Henry.

MRS. WEATHERBY: It looks like our troubles are over.

LADIES: Yes, So glad. Goodbye. (Exit left door)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Sitting down on davenport) Now I must read my invitation. (Looks at envelope and reads) To the sweetest wife in the world. (Opens invitation and reads) The husbands of the best wives in the world (Smiles and nods) invite you to a play,- "Home Sweet Home", to be given in your honor Thursday evening at 8 o'clock at the Town Hall. Now isn't that just darling. I have the dearest, sweetest husband in the world!

JERRY: Can I go too, Mom?

MRS. WEATHERBY: I don't know, Jerry. You'll have to ask your father about that. (Samuel enters back center door with box in hand which he tries to conceal at his side. Mrs. Weatherby rises as she turns and sees him)

MRS. WEATHERBY: Oh, Samuel, I have just received your lovely invitation. Were you trying to surprise me? How sweet of you. (Both sit down on davenport)

SAMUEL: Oh, don't mention it, Marier.

MRS. WEATHERBY: And have you been going out every night just to practice the play, Samuel?

SAMUEL: Well, yes I was, Marier. But we didn't want you women folks to know. Thought it would be nice to spring a little surprise.

MRS. WEATHERBY: That was so sweet of you Samuel. You know I was just joking when I tried to find out where you were going.

SAMUEL: I understood, Marier. I shouldn't have given you that invitation until tomorrow, but somehow I couldn't keep it. You know I haven't done much for you, Marier (Puts his arm around her) but we have always got along.

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Laying her head on his shoulder) I should say we have Samuel. All these years and not a cross word between us.

SAMUEL: Marier, I think it was a wonderful thing for you to go down and sing to those poor men in the jail.

MRS. WEATHERBY: Oh, don't mention it, Samuel. Please, never again.

SAMUEL: Well I'm not much to go along in life with a woman like you, Marier, and my part in the play won't be much, but I wanted to do it for you. And Marier (Reaches down and gets box which has been placed by side of davenport) I wanted you to look nice at the play Thursday night, so I bought this for you. (Hands her the box)

MRS. WEATHERBY: (Opens box and exclaims) Oh, Samuel, is this for me?

SAMUEL: Well, it wouldn't be for anyone else, Marier.

(Mrs. Weatherby stands up and holds the beautiful gown up in front of her. Then sinks on davenport and throws arms around Samuel)

MRS. WEATHERBY: Oh, Samuel!

JERRY: (Jumps up to see dress. Sits down on davenport by the side of Samuel. Whistles) Jiminy crickets.

(Anna Belle enters center door. Sees dress and sits down by Mrs. Weatherby)

ANNA BELLE: Oh, Mother, What a lovely dress. It's beautiful!

MRS. WEATHERBY: Yes. It is beautiful. Your father gave it to me. It's darling. (Samuel begins singing "Home Sweet Home" and others join in as curtain falls)

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