

## Abby, Martha, Witherspoon

ABBY. [*Turning slowly around L. as she speaks.*] I wish we could show him he isn't so smart! [*Her eyes fall on WITHERSPOON. She studies him. MARTHA turns from door and sees ABBY'S contemplation. ABBY speaks sweetly.*] Mr. Witherspoon? [*WITHERSPOON turns around facing them.*] Does your family live with you at Happy Dale?

WITHERSPOON. I have no family.

ABBY. Oh ——

MARTHA. [*Stepping into room.*] Well, I suppose you consider everyone at Happy Dale your family?

WITHERSPOON. I'm afraid you don't quite understand. As head of the institution, I have to keep quite aloof.

ABBY. That must make it very lonely for you.

WITHERSPOON. It does. But my duty is my duty.

ABBY. [*Turning to MARTHA.*] Well, Martha —— [*MARTHA takes her cue and goes to sideboard for bottle of wine. Bottle in L. cupboard is empty. She puts it back and takes out full bottle from R. cupboard. She brings bottle and wine-glass to table. ABBY continues talking.*] If Mr. Witherspoon won't join us for breakfast, I think at least we should offer him a glass of elderberry wine.

WITHERSPOON. [*Severely.*] Elderberry wine?

MARTHA. We make it ourselves.

WITHERSPOON. [*Melting slightly.*] Why, yes . . . [*Severely again.*] Of course, at Happy Dale our relationship will be more formal—but here —— [*He sits in chair L. of table as MARTHA pours wine. ABBY is beside MARTHA.*] You don't see much elderberry wine nowadays—I thought I'd had my last glass of it.

ABBY. Oh, no ——

MARTHA. [*Handing him glass of wine.*] No, here it is.

[*WITHERSPOON toasts the ladies and lifts glass to his lips, but the curtain falls before he does. . . .*]

[*For a curtain call it is suggested the 12 elderly gentlemen file out of the cellar entrance, stand in a line across the stage, and bow.*]

THE END