

Stage Manager

(During preceding scene, the lights have gradually dimmed to late afternoon. Now they slowly change to night.)

STAGE MANAGER. *(appears with manuscript under his arm)*

Thank you. Thank you! That'll do. We'll have to interrupt again here. Thank you, Mrs. Webb; thank you, Emily.

There are some more things we want to explore about this town.

(He comes to the center of the stage. During the following speech the lights gradually dim to darkness, leaving only a spot on him.)

I think this is a good time to tell you that the Cartwright interests have just begun building a new bank in Grover's Corners – had to go to Vermont for the marble, sorry to say. And they've asked a friend of mine what they should put in the cornerstone for people to dig up...a thousand years from now...Of course, they've put in a copy of *The New York Times* and a copy of Mr. Webb's *Sentinel*...We're kind of interested in this because some scientific fellas have found a way of painting all that reading matter with a glue – a silicate glue – that'll make it keep a thousand – two thousand years. We're putting in a Bible...and the Constitution of the United States – and a copy of William Shakespeare's plays. What do you say, folks? What do you think? Y'know – Babylon once had two million people in it, and all we know about 'em is the names of the kings and some copies of wheat contracts...and contracts for the sale of slaves. Yet every night all those families sat down to supper, and the father came home from his work, and the smoke went up the chimney, – same as here. And even in Greece and Rome, all we know about the *real* life of the people is what we can piece together out of the

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joking poems and the comedies they wrote for the theatre back then. So I'm going to have a copy of this play put in the cornerstone and the people a thousand years from now'll know a few simple facts about us – more than the Treaty of Versailles and the Lindbergh flight. See what I mean? So – people a thousand years from now – this is the way we were in the provinces north of New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. – This is the way we were: in our growing up and in our marrying and in our living and in our dying.

End

(A choir partially concealed in the orchestra pit has begun singing "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds".)*

(SIMON STIMSON stands directing them.)

(Two ladders have been pushed onto the stage; they serve as indication of the second story in the Gibbs and Webb houses. GEORGE and EMILY mount them, and apply themselves to their schoolwork.)

(DR. GIBBS has entered and is seated in his kitchen reading.)

STAGE MANAGER. *(cont.)* 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.

(He listens a minute, then withdraws downstage.)

(At the end of the first line of the hymn, lights in the pit have come up showing the heads of the choir silhouetted as they face the stage, while SIMON STIMSON conducts them, facing the audience, – now slightly drunk.)

SIMON STIMSON. *(as verse ends)* Now look here, everybody. Music come into the world to give pleasure.

*This music appears on page 101 in the back of this Acting Edition.