

Samuel French Acting Edition

Our Town

by Thornton Wilder

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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CHARACTERS

(In 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 Balcony
Man In The Auditorium
Lady In The Box
Simon Stimson
Mrs. Soames
Constable Warren
Si Crowell
Three Baseball Players
Sam Craig
Joe Stoddard
Farmer Mccarty
Man Among The Dead
Woman Among The Dead

SETTING

The entire play tathem—they can speak directly to the audience.

Excerpt From Act II

GEORGE. (hurt) Emily, why are you mad at me?

EMILY. (defensive) I'm not mad at you.

GEORGE. You've been treating me so funny lately.

EMILY. (dreading to face the issue) Well, since you ask me, I might as well say it right out, George, –

(She catches sight of a teacher passing.)

Good-by, Miss Corcoran.

GEORGE. Good-by, Miss Corcoran. – Wha – what is it?

EMILY. *(not scoldingly; finding it difficult to say)* I don't like the whole change that's come over you in the last year.

(GEORGE turns away, a bit hurt. She glances at him.)

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. (helpless and hurt) 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.

(They take a step or two in silence, then stand still in misery.)

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. (all innocence, yet firm) 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.

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. (cries)

GEORGE. (choked voice) 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. (controlling herself) Well, thank you...I would.

(GEORGE starts to take her arm, but is too shy. They advance toward the audience and make an abrupt right turn, opening the door of Morgan's drugstore. Under strong emotion, EMILY keeps her face down. GEORGE speaks to some passers-by.)

GEORGE. Hello, Stew, – how are you? – Good afternoon, Mrs. Slocum.

(GEORGE starts into store, then steps back to let EMILY go first. They cross to stools and GEORGE puts books down on board.)

(The STAGE MANAGER, wearing spectacles and assuming the role of Mr. Morgan, enters abruptly from the right and stands between the audience and the counter of his soda fountain.)

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

GEORGE. (*He gropes for an explanation.*) 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. (*drawing a drink of water*) Well, now! You take a drink of water, Emily.

(**EMILY** and **GEORGE** sit on stools.)

You look all shook up. I tell you, you've got to look both ways before you cross Main Street these days.

(Sets glass before her. She sips.)

Gets worse every year. – What'll you have?

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. (*working the faucets*) Two strawberry ice-cream sodas, yes sir. Yes, sir. There are a hundred and twenty-five horses in Grover's Corners this minute I'm talking to you.

State Inspector was in here yesterday. And now they're bringing in these auto-mo-biles, the best thing to do is to just stay home. Why, I can remember when a dog could go to sleep all day in the middle of Main Street and nothing come along to disturb him.

(*He sets the imaginary glasses before them.*)

There they are. Enjoy 'em.

(*He sees a customer, right.*)

Yes, Mrs. Ellis. What can I do for you?

(*He goes out right.*)

EMILY. They're so expensive. (sips through straw)

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. N-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. (with a brief look at her) 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?

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. They start sipping the sodas through the straws.)

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. (looks at him, happy that he might not leave town) Why, George –

GEORGE. (eagerly) 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. (glowing) My!

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. (to him, arguing nobly against her inclinations) 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. (*after a pause, very seriously*) 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.

(She looks at him wide-eyed, he at her.)

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.

EMILY. (quietly) I think it's awfully important, too. (pause)

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. (*pause*) So I guess this is an important talk we've been having.

EMILY. Yes...yes.

GEORGE. (*takes a deep breath and straightens his back*)
Wait just a minute and I'll walk you home.