

Ronald Elwy Mitchell

A HUSBAND FOR BREAKFAST

A COMEDY IN A WELSH SETTING

Copyright, 1936, by Ronald Elwy Mitchell
Copyright (Acting Edition), 1937, Ronald Elwy Mitchell

CHARACTERS

Aholibah Jones
Isaiah Jones
Miss Pugh bach
Mrs Morris the Bakery
Moses Roberts
Captain Hughes

A HUSBAND FOR BREAKFAST

The Scene is the interior of Aholibah Jones's cottage on the mountain road – an untidy, dirty place, much in keeping with the slatternly appearance of Aholibah herself. There is a kitchen range R – the sort which is in common use in Wales – and a door below it, leading to the rest of the cottage. The door to the street is up L. There is a dresser C, against the back wall, a sofa L below the street door and a table with chairs in the C of the room. An arm- or rocking-chair is above the fireplace.

It is breakfast-time. Aholibah enters down R, stretching and yawning. It is a fine summer morning, so she opens the street door without troubling to glance out, leaves it open, and goes towards the kitchen range. Half-way to it she stops, turns her head up, and calls

AHOLIBAH: Sai!

[No answer.]

Sai!

[No answer.]

Isaiah!

[Still no answer. She gives him up, mumbling as she continues slowly with her work.]

Give that man three glasses of beer and he'll sleep all night and all next day until tea-time. I never saw such a man, or heard one, either; snoring away like thunder in the mountains. SAI!

[She ends her mumbling with a sudden shout, but there is no response. She stuffs paper into the grate, put a few sticks of wood on top, some pieces of coal to finish, sets a match to it, and

wipes her hands on herself. She takes the lid off the kettle and peers inside. It contains water, so she puts it over the newly lighted fire. As she is wondering lazily what to do next a small figure darkens the doorway. It is Miss Pugh bach, a serious-faced little old lady with a limp. She walks with a stick, and speaks in a high voice. When she gets excited, which is often, she squeals. Miss Pugh looks round the kitchen, and shows great satisfaction at seeing no one in it but Aholibah. Aholibah turns.]

Oh, it's you, Miss Pugh bach.

MISS PUGH: Good morning, Aholibah Jones. May I come in?

AHOLIBAH: Yes, indeed. Step inside. I hadn't thought to be having visitors so early in the morning.

MISS PUGH: Yes, it is early, but it's such a sweet morning it does my heart good to be up and about.

AHOLIBAH: If it only did your gammy leg good it'd be a grand day for you, Miss Pugh bach.

MISS PUGH [*sitting above the table*] Oh, I don't complain. If I can get myself out of bed at seven o'clock and be here before anyone else, and me sixty-five last April, I'm thinking there's lots of people with two sound legs and nearer putting one of them in the grave than me.

AHOLIBAH: Why do you say 'here before anyone else'? What would people be coming up the hill to see me about this morning?

MISS PUGH: Oh, just neighbourly visits like, isn't it?

AHOLIBAH: Neighbourly visits before I've eaten my breakfast? What's got into the people of the village to be gadding about in the small hours? Why, it's only half-past seven, and I wouldn't be out of bed myself if

it wasn't for Isaiah snoring from the minute he dropped asleep, and no amount of prodding would stop him.

MISS PUGH: Is Isaiah still in bed?

AHOLIBAH: I've been hollerin' at him so loud you'd hear it from your own back-kitchen, and that only a minute before you came in.

MISS PUGH: Fancy! I *did* hear something, but I -

AHOLIBAH: Miss Pugh bach, tell me what you came to see me so early for, and don't be giving me no more nonsense about neighbourly visits.

MISS PUGH: I suppose Isaiah didn't tell you anything about what happened last night?

AHOLIBAH: He didn't need to. I could smell it on him before he was half-way up the hill.

MISS PUGH: Well, we all had a little drop to drink, of course. Now I come to think of it, why weren't you there, Aholibah?

AHOLIBAH: My Auntie Priscilla came to supper and stayed until after ten, and she's dead against the drink. Isaiah got out of staying at home by saying he was going to a temperance meeting, and it was all I could do to keep Auntie Priscilla from going with him.

MISS PUGH: Well, well! That's a good one, isn't it. Temperance meeting at the *Sitting Hen*! Ha, ha! That's comical.

AHOLIBAH: It wasn't comical me holding on to Auntie Priscilla with one hand and Isaiah asking me to find his blue ribbon with the other.

MISS PUGH: No wonder Isaiah was so jolly last night and gave us drinks all round.

AHOLIBAH: Gave you drinks all round? Isaiah? How could he? Where did he get the money from?

MISS PUGH: Well, he'd already had several drinks and other people had paid, and he hadn't any money on him, so he made some.

AHOLIBAH: Made some? Isaiah made some money? Why, he can't make as much as a penny when he's sober, and he's never done nothing but lose mine when he's been drinking.

MISS PUGH: You won't be angry with me if I tell you how it all happened?

AHOLIBAH: Angry? No! Go on quick, and don't waste breath.

[*She goes on with the breakfast preparations while Miss Pugh speaks.*]

MISS PUGH: Well, you see, we'd all had our drinks and Hugh Parry the Post, and Mrs Morris, and Moses Roberts were all flush - I don't know how, but they were - and by nine o'clock the only one who hadn't paid for a round of drinks was Isaiah.

AHOLIBAH: Yes. I can believe that.

MISS PUGH: I hope you can believe the rest of the story. 'Lend me half a crown,' says Isaiah to Moses Roberts, 'and I'll treat you all to a round of drinks.' 'No, indeed!' says Moses Roberts. 'For if I lend you half a crown I'll never see it again, and that's certain. But I'll tell you what I'll do: if you can name me anything you've got that's worth half a crown I'll buy it from you.' They was both pretty drunk by then, and Isaiah offered him the one cow you have. 'No, no,' says Moses Roberts, 'that's not worth half a crown. It's nearly dead with bronchitis.' Well,

Isaiah went on offering, and he offered the house you live in, but Mrs Morris called out, 'No, indeed! There's a mortgage on it.'

AHOLIBAH: She's right. There is.

MISS PUGH: Then Isaiah got wild, and started offering things you have about the house, but everything he offered people said, 'No, no. Fair play, That's Aholibah's. 'Tisn't yours to give,' and it seemed that Isaiah hadn't anything in the whole world that was worth half a crown.

AHOLIBAH: It's true. He hasn't.

MISS PUGH: Of course, we all laughed over that, and teased him about having a wife who owned everything, when suddenly he said, 'Moses Roberts, I'll sell you Aholibah, my wife.'

AHOLIBAH: What?

MISS PUGH: That's as true as I'm sitting here, and may God strike me dead if I tell a lie.

AHOLIBAH: If I didn't know he was drunk and not responsible for his words I'd never let him forget that - no, indeed I wouldn't.

MISS PUGH: There's more to come. Moses Roberts was excited and very, very drunk, or he wouldn't have said what he did.

AHOLIBAH: What was it he said?

MISS PUGH: He said, 'All right'.

AHOLIBAH: Miss Pugh *bach*, do you sit there and tell me that Isaiah offered to sell me to that old skinflint Moses Roberts, and that Moses said, 'All right'?

MISS PUGH: It's the Gospel truth, Aholibah Jones, and may I never be forgiven if it isn't.

AHOLIBAH: I can see how there's a lot to Auntie Priscilla and her talk of temperance.

MISS PUGH: For half a crown.

AHOLIBAH: What?

MISS PUGH: It was for half a crown he sold you.

AHOLIBAH: You don't mean to say that the half-crown was handed over, do you?

MISS PUGH: Oh, yes. We all had another round of drinks on it.

AHOLIBAH: Then it's gone. Isaiah hasn't got it.

MISS PUGH: Oh, no. It's safe in Captain Hughes' till. I saw it drop there with my own eyes. It was a good one, too.

AHOLIBAH: That's a wonder, coming from Moses Roberts.

MISS PUGH: Yes, isn't it?

AHOLIBAH: And you all stood around and didn't raise a finger to stop it happening?

MISS PUGH: How could we help it? Besides, we were the witnesses, and it wasn't our place to interfere.

AHOLIBAH: The whole thing is ridiculous, and I'll give them both a piece of my mind! And if I'm not mistaken, Isaiah will be wearing his temperance ribbon in earnest before long. He's got no right to sell me for anything. He doesn't own me; I own him.

MISS PUGH [*seriously*]: I don't think anybody would give you half a crown for Isaiah.

AHOLIBAH: I'm certain they wouldn't, drunk or sober. Not that I'd ever try. Isn't there something in the Bible about you mustn't sell your husband or wife?

MISS PUGH: I don't remember it. What book would it be in?

AHOLIBAH: Isn't it in the Ten Commandments?

MISS PUGH: I don't think.

[*Mrs Morris the Bakery wheezes into view at the doorway. She is fat and coarse and forty-eight.*]

MRS MORRIS [*heartily*]: Well, well! What's the happenings with the Queen of Sheba this morning?

AHOLIBAH [*with dignity*]: If you're calling in on your way to the sand-pit, Mrs Morris the Bakery, to get a little flour for your bread, we won't keep you.

[*Mrs Morris enters and makes herself heavily comfortable on the sofa.*]

MRS MORRIS: Now, now, Aholibah Jones, it isn't every day you get a new husband. You wouldn't refuse me the pleasure of wishing you joy, would you?

MISS PUGH: Mrs Morris, have you seen the bridegroom this morning?

MRS MORRIS: Not yet, but he'll be here.

AHOLIBAH: Is the whole village coming to my house to hinder me at my work?

MRS MORRIS: Coming to rejoice, Mrs Jones, and be with you at the wedding-feast.

AHOLIBAH: There isn't going to be no wedding-feast.

MRS MORRIS: That would be a shame, indeed it would, for I brought you a little present from my bakery garden - a cucumber, fourteen inches long it is, from tip to tip.

[*She extracts the cucumber from her bosom.*]

AHOLIBAH: You can keep your old cucumber. [*She goes about her work again.*]

MISS PUGH: Give it to Isaiah for a consolation prize.

MRS MORRIS: Yes, indeed. Poor Isaiah! Fifty years old he is, isn't he?

MISS PUGH: Moses Roberts is only forty-four.
 MRS MORRIS: Six years more to go. Then she'll be looking out for a third husband.
 MISS PUGH: She's forty-six herself. She'll be fifty-two in six years' time.
 MRS MORRIS: So she will. She won't fetch half a crown then, I'm telling you.
 [There is a noise upstairs.]
 MISS PUGH [excitedly] Oh, here's Isaiah coming down this minute! He'll get it. You watch.
 AHOLIBAH: Is that you, Sai? Come along. Don't be afraid.
 [Isaiah Jones, a scrawny, sheep-eyed fellow of fifty, peers apprehensively into the room through the door down R.]
 Come on, I say.
 [Isaiah comes, but not willingly.]
 MISS PUGH }
 MRS MORRIS } [together] Good morning, Isaiah Jones.
 ISAIAH [at R end of table] Good morning, ladies.
 AHOLIBAH: They're not ladies. They're just a pair of old boozers that saw you make a fool out of yourself last night, and, what's more, a fool out of me. So you sold me, did you? You sold me for half a crown. And to Moses Roberts, of all people - a skinny bag of bones you wouldn't give a sick sheep-dog!
 ISAIAH [protesting] No, no, my dear! Listen! That was only a joke. You don't think I'd -
 AHOLIBAH [with her back to the fireplace] Oh, a joke, was it! Show me that half-crown you had in payment!
 MISS PUGH: Yes, indeed.
 AHOLIBAH: Where is it?
 ISAIAH: I haven't got it.

AHOLIBAH: Where is it?
 ISAIAH: It's in the *Sitting Hen*.
 AHOLIBAH: Oh! So you *did* sell me.
 MISS PUGH [to Mrs Morris] I told you he'd catch it.
 [Moses Roberts appears in the doorway, and behind him Captain Hughes ~~and another man~~.]
 ISAIAH: We weren't serious. Moses Roberts has probably forgotten everything that happened.
 MOSES [from the door] Oh, I have, have I?
 MISS PUGH: Goodness me!
 [All four in the room turn round at the angry, rasping voice of Moses Roberts.]
 MOSES: Well, let me tell you, I haven't forgotten the way you swindled a half-crown out of me last night.
 [He comes forward LC into the room, and the other two follow him.]
 ISAIAH: I didn't swindle you.
 MOSES: I've brought my witnesses. Didn't I hand Isaiah Jones half a crown last night?
 CAPTAIN HUGHES } [~~Isaiah Jones and Mrs Morris~~]
 } You did.
 MISS PUGH: We all had a drink on it.
 MOSES: And have I had anything in return?
 CAPTAIN HUGHES } [~~Isaiah Jones~~]
 } [together] No.
 MOSES: Just an offer, that's all. And such an offer that no man in his right mind would accept.
 AHOLIBAH: Is that so?
 MOSES: You keep out of this, Aholibah Jones. This has nothing to do with you.
 AHOLIBAH: Hasn't it, indeed? Not when I've just heard

that I was sold like a sheep or a pound of butter or one of Mrs Morris's currant buns?

MOSES: Sold? You weren't sold. He just dragged you in to get my half-crown out of me, and because he couldn't think of anything else he could call his own. You didn't think I'd stick to the bargain, did you, and land myself until my dying day with a woman who's known from ~~Denbigh to Carnarvon~~ ^{Heddy to Carnarvon} for a scold and a bully and a thieving gossip? [He sits L of the table.]

MRS MORRIS: Well done, Moses Roberts!

MISS PUGH [gleefully] Go on, Aholibah Jones! Tell him what you think of him now.

AHOLIBAH: More fool you, Moses Roberts, for giving up your half-crown when you didn't mean to hold to the bargain.

CAPTAIN HUGHES: That's true.

MOSES: But I haven't had anything for my half-crown. I'm not letting it go as easy as that.

AHOLIBAH: You shouldn't have let it out of your pocket last night. It's too late to want it back now.

MOSES: That's plain stealing – holding on to my money and giving me nothing for it.

^{Capt Hughes} ~~Take Aholibah Jones. She's the bargain you made.~~

MRS MORRIS: Yes, that's right. We came along to see a wedding.

MOSES [to Aholibah] That's enough foolery, now! Give me back my half-crown and I won't say no more about it.

AHOLIBAH: Don't ask me for half a crown. You get it from the man you gave it to.

MOSES: Isaiah Jones, give me back my half-crown.

ISAIAH: How can I? Didn't I spend it on drinks in your pub, Captain Hughes?

CAPTAIN HUGHES: You did, indeed. We all saw you do it.

MISS PUGH: No one would forget a thing like that.

MOSES: It doesn't have to be the same half-crown. Any two-and-sixpence will do.

ISAIAH: I haven't got two-and-sixpence. What do you think I am? A millionaire?

MOSES: You can get it, can't you?

ISAIAH: Where from?

MOSES: Can't you borrow it? Mrs Morris the Bakery, can't you lend him half a crown?

MRS MORRIS: To pay you? No, indeed! I'd have to get it out of him myself then, instead of watching you.

MOSES: Miss Pugh *bach* –

MISS PUGH: You don't any of you borrow a penny from me.

MOSES: Capt –

CAPTAIN HUGHES	} before before Moses	{ No, no, Moses Roberts.
Hughes		

MOSES [to Isaiah]: You can get it from your wife, can't you?

ISAIAH: I don't know.

MOSES: Well, try.

AHOLIBAH: That's it. Just you try.

ISAIAH [helplessly] You see? [He goes up and sits in the arm-chair.]

MOSES: That's not trying. Aholibah Jones, won't you give your own husband half a crown to buy yourself off from

a bargain that was made when the two of us was drunk?
 AHOLIBAH: But he's not my husband no more. He sold me.
 MOSES: Don't be silly! That was a joke.
 AHOLIBAH: Oh, no, it wasn't. He sold me to you for half a crown; and he can't pay you back your half-crown, so the bargain holds, and you'll have to take me instead.
 MOSES: Take you? For a wife? I'd throw myself off the mountain first.
 AHOLIBAH [*appealing to the crowd*] Isn't it right? Wasn't the bargain made with you as witnesses?
 MISS PUGH: Yes, it was.
 MRS MORRIS: Yes, indeed. } [*All together, delighted at the unexpected and sensational trend of events.*]
~~MISS PUGH~~ }
 CAPTAIN HUGHES: It was. }
 AHOLIBAH: All right, then. If I'm willing, doesn't the bargain hold?
 MISS PUGH } { Yes, yes. Of course it holds.
 MRS MORRIS } [*together*] { That's right. That's right.
 CAPTAIN HUGHES: You're caught now, Moses.
 MOSES: Nothing of the sort. She can't hold me to a thing like that.
 AHOLIBAH: Why can't I? You brought it on yourself.
 MOSES: No, no. You're just joking.
~~MISS PUGH~~: Are you joking, Aholibah?
 AHOLIBAH: Why should I be joking? Take a look at Isaiah there. Wouldn't any woman want a change, even if it's only to Moses Roberts?
 MRS MORRIS: There's something in that.
 MISS PUGH: Now we're going to have some fun.

MOSES: I don't believe you. You've always hated me. You've always plotted against me and called me names. [*Aholibah makes a half-threatening, half-amorous movement towards him.*]
 AHOLIBAH: Only because deep down, all the time, I loved you, dear Moses Roberts.
 MOSES [*rising with a yell of alarm*] No, no! Let me go! Let me go!
 CAPTAIN HUGHES [*seizing him*] No, no. You brought us here. You stay and see this through. [*He pushes him to c.*]
~~MISS PUGH~~ You made the bargain, remember!
 MOSES: I didn't know she felt that way about me, or I'd never have mentioned her name. I'd have left the country; I'd have taken the first boat to America.
 AHOLIBAH [*pulling him to the chair r of the table*] You'll grow to love me, Moses Roberts, even if it doesn't seem so easy now.
 MOSES: Easy! Oh, dear God, help me! [*He is now seated r of the table.*]
 MISS PUGH: Go on, Aholibah Jones! Show him how you love him.
 AHOLIBAH: There'll be time enough for that when we haven't all you people around us spying and giggling, won't there, Moses?
 MOSES [*rising and making another effort to escape*] Oh, please!
 CAPTAIN HUGHES } [~~MISS PUGH~~ - blocking his way] No, no!
~~MISS PUGH~~ }
 MOSES: You wouldn't give me up like this, would you? Not when we've been such friends.
 CAPTAIN HUGHES: A bargain's a bargain.
~~MISS PUGH~~

MOSES: But it wasn't serious. You know it wasn't.

MRS MORRIS: You paid half a crown for it.

MOSES: I wasn't sober. It isn't fair!

AHOLIBAH: Nobody can say I forced myself on you. All this time I've been waiting for this to happen. Now at last you're my husband, oh, what times we'll have!

ISAIAH: What's going to happen to me?

MISS PUGH: Yes. What's Isaiah going to do?

AHOLIBAH: Anything he likes.

MRS MORRIS: Mind! That kettle's going to boil over.

[Aholibah hurries to it.]

AHOLIBAH: That's for my breakfast. Moses! Cut me a slice of bread.

MOSES [aghast] What!

AHOLIBAH: I said, 'Cut me a slice of bread'.

MISS PUGH [to Mrs Morris] Isn't this fun?

AHOLIBAH: Look sharp with you!

MOSES: You can't order me about like that!

AHOLIBAH: Oh, can't I? We'll see about that. You're my husband now of your own free choice. Cut that bread this minute, or I'll give you such a whack on the head with the skillet you won't forget to do what I say again. A few minutes ago, Moses Roberts, you called me the worst scold, bully, and thieving gossip between ~~_____~~ ~~_____~~. Are you going to do what you're told?

CAPTAIN HUGHES: You'd better do it, Moses.

MRS MORRIS: I'd advise you to.

MOSES [weakly] Where is the bread?

MISS PUGH: There it is - on the table. Oh, I haven't had a day like this for months.

[Aholibah carries the teapot to the table and seats herself comfortably.]

AHOLIBAH [sitting R of the table] I'll have my breakfast here. Milk and sugar on the dresser.

[Moses brings the bread, and, seeing no escape, goes for the milk and sugar. The onlookers watch him with amusement and interest.]

ISAIAH [from the armchair up R] Don't I get any breakfast this morning?

[No one takes any notice of him, and during the remainder of the proceedings his existence is completely forgotten.]

AHOLIBAH [from her throne] Now that slice of bacon. The frying-pan is over the stove. And be quick with it.

[Moses goes to the fire and starts frying bacon.]

CAPTAIN HUGHES: Isn't it good to see an old bachelor being caught this way?

MRS MORRIS: And all through drinking and being too ready with his half-crowns.

^{Cpt}
^{Hughes} ~~_____~~: Yes, indeed. There's a solemn warning for us all.

MISS PUGH: See the way he fries the bacon. He's used to frying his own.

MRS MORRIS: Bachelors make the best husbands.

CAPTAIN HUGHES: Doesn't the smell of it make you hungry?

^{Mrs Morris} ~~_____~~: It does, indeed. I didn't have more than a bite of breakfast myself this morning.

MISS PUGH: Have one of my sandwiches. [She produces sandwiches.]

~~_____~~
CAPTAIN HUGHES: You brought sandwiches with you?

Meady
Cannon

A HUSBAND FOR BREAKFAST

MISS PUGH: I didn't have any breakfast. I wanted to be here to see everything that happened, and I thought it might be a long day, so I brought sandwiches. Have one.

CAPTAIN HUGHES: ~~████████████████████~~ I think I'll try just one.

~~████████████████████~~ There's thoughtful you are, Miss Pugh
bach!

MRS MORRIS: Have a piece of my cucumber. I brought it for a wedding-present, but the bride was shy.

[There is a general laugh, and they all munch sandwiches and cucumber while watching the proceedings.]

CAPTAIN HUGHES: Oh, that's champion!

MRS MORRIS: Do you think she'll make him do the wash?
~~████████████████████~~ It would be fun if she did.

AHOLIBAH: Hurry up with that bacon, Moses!

[Moses brings the bacon, then turns to the crowd.]

MOSES: Look here! This has gone too far. I won't be made a fool of any longer.

CAPTAIN HUGHES: Who's making a fool of you but yourself?

MOSES: Aholibah Jones, I won't say nothing more about that half-crown if you'll let things stand where they are now, and stop the joke this minute.

AHOLIBAH: Joke? What joke, my dear?

MISS PUGH: Listen to her!

MOSES: You know what I mean. I'll forget about the half-crown debt.

AHOLIBAH: Oh, that! I'd already forgotten it. What's a half-crown, Moses dear, between husband and wife?

MOSES: I'll give you a bushel of wheat if you'll stop this nonsense.

A HUSBAND FOR BREAKFAST

AHOLIBAH: A bushel of wheat. When I have you for my husband?

MOSES: You know quite well you don't want me for a husband.

AHOLIBAH: Whether I want you or not, I'm sold to you now, and we have to put up with each other for better or worse.

MOSES: This here is all worse, and there's no better to it at all.

AHOLIBAH: You keep a civil tongue in your head! [*Then gently.*] You won't find me so bad when you get to know me.

MOSES: Look here! I'll make it two bushels of wheat.

AHOLIBAH: Two bushels of wheat! Ha! That's funny.

MOSES: What's funny about it?

AHOLIBAH: You offering me two bushels of wheat when all you have and you too are mine now.

MOSES: All I have? It was me bought you, not you bought me. All I have, indeed!

AHOLIBAH: We'll see.

MOSES: Four bushels of wheat. There, that's being princely!

AHOLIBAH: Don't waste time gabbling such stuff. Clean them boots down there!

MOSES [*defiantly*] I won't!

~~████████████████████~~

CAPTAIN HUGHES: Good for Moses!

[*Aholibah rises threateningly.*]

AHOLIBAH: What's that you said?

MOSES [*quailing*] Well, just this once. But never again, mind you, never again. [*He picks up some boots below the fireplace.*]

MRS MORRIS: Offer her more, Moses.

MISS PUGH: Yes. Four bushels of wheat isn't much.

MOSES: If I offer her more she'll only take all I have. She's well known for a grasping, thieving baggage that should have been hung by the neck years and years ago.

AHOLIBAH [*who is now seated again*] Get on with them boots! Every time you say a word against me you're putting up the price of me letting you off.

MOSES [*eagerly*] Then you will let me off?

AHOLIBAH: Try me.

MOSES [*less eagerly*] No, you just want to bleed me of all I've got. [*He returns dolefully to the boots.*]

AHOLIBAH: Suit yourself. I can wait. But the slower you are the higher goes the price. And while you're still my husband, well, there's plenty of odd jobs around here for a handy-man.

CAPTAIN HUGHES: Try her with half a dozen hens, Moses.

MOSES [*sitting on the chair below the fireplace*] Do you think I'm going to hand over half a dozen of my fat hens to be starved to death in this rat-hole?

AHOLIBAH: Make it six Buff Orpingtons and six Rhode Island Reds.

MISS PUGH: You'd better let your hens go, or she'll be having the brown cow.

MRS MORRIS: And the litter of pigs that was born a week ago Thursday.

MOSES: Don't be reminding her, you fools, of what I've got! Just putting ideas into her head you are.

CAPTAIN HUGHES: It's funny, isn't it, how much a careful man like Moses here can save in thirty years of farm-

ing since he came into his bit of property, a lad of fourteen only?

Mrs. Jones: Aye; and watch him lose it all now in the twinkling of an eyelid.

MISS PUGH: Yes, indeed. There's a lesson to remember.

MOSES [*flinging down the boots passionately*] Shut your mouths, you stupid idiots! I'm not losing all I've got or anything like it. I'd have got out of this long ago if it wasn't for you all sitting in a row cheering her on.

MRS MORRIS: We're not cheering nobody on. We're impartial.

AHOLIBAH: Pick up them boots, Moses Roberts, and don't be showing tantrums on your wedding-day.

MOSES: Wedding-day be damned! I'm not marrying you, Aholibah Jones, or any other woman hereabouts - no, not if my dead body was dragged to the altar itself and the parson bribed.

AHOLIBAH: Let me see, where were we with them hens, now? I'm losing count.

MISS PUGH: It was six of each. I remember.

MRS MORRIS: And four bushels of wheat.

MOSES: Would you be satisfied with that, Aholibah Jones?

AHOLIBAH: If you've finished the boots, Moses, you can be getting on with cleaning them knives and forks.

MISS PUGH [*squealing with delight*] Make him do the wash! Make him do the wash!

CAPTAIN HUGHES: Go on, Moses. Give her the cow.

MOSES: I won't let that brown cow go - not if I'm kept here till Doomsday.

MRS MORRIS: You'll be finding yourself feeding the pig

A HUSBAND FOR BREAKFAST

and cleaning out the sty when you're an old, old man with a white beard.

Cpt. Hyles: I'd sooner part with a brown cow than have that happen to me.

MOSES [almost in tears] If I let the cow go, Aholibah Jones, will you call it even?

AHOLIBAH: Make it six bushels of wheat, six Buff Orpingtons, six Rhode Island Reds, the brown cow, and the new litter of pigs, and I'll consider it.

Cpt. Hyles: That's fair enough.

MOSES: *Bobl amwy!* You'll leave me with nothing at all.

MISS PUGH: Nonsense, Moses Roberts! I can think of a whole lot of other things you've got that hasn't been mentioned.

MOSES: Then don't mention them.

CAPTAIN HUGHES: If you get off with that much only you're a lucky man, and Aholibah's a walking saint to give you up so lightly.

AHOLIBAH: Of course, if you think I'm asking too much of you, there's the washing up you can do and the windows to clean. And - now Miss Pugh mentions it - you have a pondful of ducks and a -

MOSES [hastily] No, no! I'll take your offer if you'll let me go now and swear before these witnesses that you'll never claim me as your husband again.

AHOLIBAH: Do you swear that I'll have the things I mentioned to-day before the sun sets?

MOSES: Yes, yes! I swear!

AHOLIBAH: You heard him?

A HUSBAND FOR BREAKFAST

MISS PUGH

MRS MORRIS

CAPTAIN HUGHES

[together] Yes, we heard him.

AHOLIBAH: I swear too. It's a bargain.

MOSES: Then I'm not your husband any more. [Feelingly.]

Thank God! [He rises.]

CAPTAIN HUGHES: There's a big fool you were, Moses Roberts, to let Aholibah Jones do you out of your new litter of pigs.

MRS MORRIS: And your brown cow.

MISS PUGH: And six bushels of wheat and all those hens.

MOSES: I don't care. Anything is worth what I've got myself free of. Being Aholibah's husband for ten minutes is the worst thing that's ever happened to me, and when I think of being it for the rest of my life -

AHOLIBAH [rising and facing Moses] Do you suppose for one minute, you froth-witted scarecrow, that I'd have you for a husband a minute longer than I could frighten you into handing over some of your ill-gotten riches?

MOSES: You can't say that now when you -

CAPTAIN HUGHES [crossing over and stepping between them]

Now, now, now, now! Let's have no harsh words.

MISS PUGH [rising] No, indeed, not after such a lovely morning.

MRS MORRIS [rising also] Well, well! Will you look at Isaiah! Fast asleep and missing all the fun.

[He is.]

MISS PUGH: Give him a shake, Hugh Parry, and wake him.

Cpt. Hyles: Oh, no, for shame! Let him think he's not Aholibah's husband a little while longer, isn't it? →

A HUSBAND FOR BREAKFAST

CAPTAIN HUGHES: Well, my pub's been unattended long enough. Are you walking down the hill, Moses Roberts?

MOSES: The sooner I leave this house the better. And may God punish me if I ever enter it again!

AHOLIBAH: Wait for an invitation next time and you needn't fear no punishment.

[They all talk as they crowd out of the door.]

MISS PUGH: I have enjoyed myself. I don't know when I've had such an interesting morning, and not spending a penny.

MRS MORRIS: Well, now that's over I'll go back to my bakery and bake a batch of loaves. I'm glad I looked in.

CAPTAIN HUGHES: I'll help you choose the thinnest of your ~~loaves~~ ^{hers} Moses Roberts. You wouldn't be wanting to give her your best, would you?

~~loaves~~
~~loaves~~
~~loaves~~

[They have gone. Aholibah shakes Isaiah.]

AHOLIBAH: Sai! Wake up!

ISAIAH [waking] What's the matter?

AHOLIBAH: Don't you want any breakfast?

ISAIAH [looking round] Where have all the people gone?

AHOLIBAH: Gone home. I sent Moses Roberts packing. Sai, you're my husband again.

ISAIAH [without enthusiasm] Oh, am I?

AHOLIBAH: What shall I get you for your breakfast, my dear?

[All together in a confused murmur.]

A HUSBAND FOR BREAKFAST

ISAIAH [suspiciously] What's made you so obliging all of a sudden?

AHOLIBAH: Don't be so sour, Isaiah. It seems Moses Roberts was frightened of you being jealous of him, so he backed out of the bargain.

ISAIAH [flattered] Is that so?

AHOLIBAH: It is, indeed. But before he backed out I made him pay me six bushels of wheat, a dozen hens, his new litter of pigs, and his fine brown cow. So we're rich, Sai, we're rich!

ISAIAH [a grin lighting up his face] Then it wasn't so bad what I did last night after all?

AHOLIBAH [with a chuckle] So bad? Let me tell you this, Isaiah. The next time we're hard up and don't know which way to turn, you just go out and sell me again.

ISAIAH: For half a crown?

AHOLIBAH: For anything you like. And leave the rest to me.

CURTAIN