

① 1 MAN - 4 WOMEN

HANNIBAL. Hello.

FLORENCE. Miss Willie says the bars are only there to keep the world outside.

FAIRY. Corny—isn't it? *(As they cross down c., Fairy comes face to face with Mrs. Savage's teddy bear on sofa. She halts abruptly.)* Oh. *(She backs away.)* It's alive!

FLORENCE. Now, Fairy—you must stop frightening yourself!

MRS. SAVAGE. The poor thing's quite harmless.

FAIRY. It won't bite?

MRS. SAVAGE. It won't shed, lay eggs or bark. And—to the best of my knowledge—it's unvexed by sex. *(Crosses down to bear and pats it.)* It couldn't be less trouble.

FAIRY. In that case any friend of yours is a friend of mine.

FLORENCE. Perhaps we should introduce ourselves. You must be Mrs. Savage. I'm Florence Williams. *(Offers her hand.)*

MRS. SAVAGE. How do you do?

FLORENCE. We have been expecting you all afternoon. We're so glad to have you with us. May I introduce Fairy May?

FAIRY. *(Fervently.)* Say you love me.

MRS. SAVAGE. But—we've just met.

FAIRY. You don't have to mean it. I feel wonderful when people say they love me.

MRS. SAVAGE. Well, I'm sure everyone loves you.

FAIRY. *(Gaily, to the others.)* You see—I told you she wouldn't be spoiled. *(Then to Mrs. Savage.)* Welcome to The Cloisters. Climate best by government test.

MRS. SAVAGE. Thank you.

FLORENCE. And this is Hannibal. *(He bows.)* And this is our Mrs. Paddy.

MRS. SAVAGE. How do you do, Mrs. Paddy? *(Extends her hand. Mrs. Paddy stares at it without expression.)*

MRS. PADDY. I hate everything in the world but most of all I hate lightning, skunk cabbage, custard, mustard, spiders, blisters, girdles, mice, bees, keys, ragweed, chloroform, rhubarb, barnacles, bats, broken glass, eels, crumbs, drunks, tombstones, gallstones, salt, and thunder.

MRS. SAVAGE. *(Blinks and looks at her a moment.)* Why don't you like rhubarb?

HANNIBAL. Mrs. Paddy won't answer you, Mrs. Savage. She'll only recite the things she hates.

FAIRY. Sweet but stubborn.

FLORENCE. Mrs. Paddy stopped talking about twenty years ago.

MRS. SAVAGE. Why?

FAIRY. She got mad.

FLORENCE. Her husband told her to shut up.

FAIRY. And she did.

HANNIBAL. She gave up conversation for life.

FAIRY. But she is only giving up electricity for Lent.

MRS. SAVAGE. *(Takes Mrs. Paddy's hand and pats it.)* You're a woman of wisdom, Mrs. Paddy. There is only one thing wiser than saying very little and that's saying nothing at all. *(Mrs. Paddy reaches over and timidly strokes bear.)* Would you like to hold it? *(Mrs. Paddy quickly picks it up and scurries across to her easel, where she sits quietly—with her arms enfolding the bear and her cheek resting against its fur.)*

FAIRY. She likes you.

MRS. SAVAGE. I like her.

② MISS WILLIE & MRS. SAVAGE

MISS WILLIE. Did they *all* come in to meet you?

MRS. SAVAGE. Well—there was a Mrs. Paddy, and four others who have no business being here at their age.

MISS WILLIE. I quite agree.

MRS. SAVAGE. Do you think I belong here?

MISS WILLIE. We're understaffed, Mrs. Savage. I'm kept too busy to have any opinions.

MRS. SAVAGE. I'd like to know what they told you about me.

MISS WILLIE. Was there anything to tell?

MRS. SAVAGE. Did they mention my Memorial Fund?

MISS WILLIE. Not to me.

MRS. SAVAGE. Then they probably told you that my husband's death affected—my reason.

MISS WILLIE. That would be understandable.

MRS. SAVAGE. But untrue.

MISS WILLIE. Why—weren't you happy with your husband?

MRS. SAVAGE. I married Jonathan when I was sixteen. I loved him from the moment I met him until the moment he died. Do you know what that meant?

MISS WILLIE. I think so.

MRS. SAVAGE. Well, you don't, my dear. It meant that ~~my~~ only aim in life was to make him happy—to want what he wanted—to anticipate what would please him. And that meant that all the other things I ever wanted had to be forgotten.

MISS WILLIE. But surely you had no regrets.

MRS. SAVAGE. None. While he lived. But after he was gone—I remembered all the foolish things I'd always wanted to do.

MISS WILLIE. What had you always wanted to do?

MRS. SAVAGE. Things that would have shocked poor Jonathan.

MISS WILLIE. Such as dyeing your hair blue?

MRS. SAVAGE. That. And studying French. And ballet dancing—and people. As a girl, I was sure I could have been a great actress. So, with no responsibilities and time running out—I decided to be one.

MISS WILLIE. But don't you think you waited too long, Mrs. Savage? MRS. SAVAGE. I certainly do. Had I been a fool in my youth—no one would have noticed the difference in my old age.

MISS WILLIE. Oh—I'd never think of you as old, Mrs. Savage.

MRS. SAVAGE. Well, having kicked over the traces myself—and learned once again the importance of unimportant things—I decided I'd help others have the foolish things they'd always wanted.

MISS WILLIE. How were you going to do that?

MRS. SAVAGE. By establishing the Jonathan Savage Memorial Fund—a foundation for giving money away in memory of my husband. And that insane idea has brought me here.

MISS WILLIE. Well, you won't find it too unpleasant here. *(Rises.)* Shall we go up to your room now? *(Picks up Mrs. Savage's grip and starts for door.)*

MRS. SAVAGE. Well, at least I learned one thing from my French lessons. *(Crosses to pick up teddy bear on window seat.)*

MISS WILLIE. What's that?

MRS. SAVAGE. What I am. I'm a "mort canard." That's a "dead duck"—I think.

MISS WILLIE. Now it's not as bad as that.

MRS. SAVAGE. Yes, it is. Some day you'll realize that a great injustice was done me. You'll know that I was always quite sane. But here I am—and here they'll try to keep me—with my few foolish years taken from me. *(Miss Willie goes to door R. and stands waiting. Mrs. Savage starts toward door, but instead of crossing in a direct line, she follows the edge of the carpet until it leads her up to Miss Willie. She looks up brightly.)* If people would walk around the edge of the carpet once in a while, it would save wearing it out in the middle. *(She goes out as)*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

TITUS. I don't know what to say to you, Mother. For the life of me, I don't know what to say.

MRS. SAVAGE. Polite people say "Good evening."

LILY BELLE. Deception is so unlike you.

SAMUEL. I'm not angry—I'm just hurt.

TITUS. Have you the faintest idea of the enormity of what you've done? You've sold control of fifteen Savage industries.

LILY BELLE. We'll have to sell our stock in Savage Brass to buy it back.

MRS. SAVAGE. Oh, didn't you find out? I sold that first.

LILY BELLE. I mustn't get excited—I mustn't get excited—I get lines. (Crosses to sofa.)

TITUS. What else—what else did you dispose of?

MRS. SAVAGE. Everything in my name.

SAMUEL. (Sits down quickly.) We're ruined.

TITUS. Where is the money? You couldn't have spent it?

LILY BELLE. Tell us what you did with it, dear?

MRS. SAVAGE. I converted it into a neat little bundle of negotiable bonds—and buried them.

TITUS. When you say "buried"—you mean "hidden"?

MRS. SAVAGE. I mean buried—as in "funeral."

SAMUEL. In the ground?

LILY BELLE. I feel physically ill.

TITUS. Where is it buried?

MRS. SAVAGE. I forget. (Sits chair c.)

TITUS. Oh, Lord, grant my mother one moment of clarity!

LILY BELLE. Where did you bury it—concentrate!

MRS. SAVAGE. (Puffs her cheeks with air, then explodes them.) Best thing in the world for taking lines out of the face, Lily Belle. (Turns her attention to teddy bear.) I've got to do something about getting you a new eye. Do you know any place that sells bears' eyes, Lily Belle?

LILY BELLE. Give me that stupid thing and answer us! (Tries to take bear away from Mrs. Savage.)

MRS. SAVAGE. (Rises.) Miss Willie! Help!

TITUS. Lily Belle—wait! You're just antagonizing her. We won't get anywhere shouting.

LILY BELLE. I'm sorry, Mother. Hold your bear. We forget that you're sick.

TITUS. (Strides away from Mrs. Savage.) What we must make you understand, Mother, is that the money involved is not what concerns us so much as the disgrace of all— (His speech is interrupted by a scream from Lily Belle. He whirls about.) What happened?

LILY BELLE. (Backing away from Mrs. Savage.) She bit me! (Rubs her hand and glares at Mrs. Savage, who has recaptured her teddy bear.)

TITUS. Nonsense. Whatever Mother might do—she wouldn't descend to biting.

SAMUEL. It was a wasp.

LILY BELLE. If ever there was a wasp—it's the woman we call Mother. I know when I'm bitten. (Holds hand out in evidence.) Teeth marks.

TITUS. (Soffly.) There is no need to raise your voice.

SAMUEL. Does it hurt?

LILY BELLE. OF COURSE IT HURTS!

TITUS. Lily Belle—we'll get nowhere fighting among ourselves. Now stop it. We can't afford it.

MRS. SAVAGE. You can't afford anything.

TITUS. We simply refuse to be angry with you, Mother. (Turns to Lily Belle.) Lily Belle, apologize.

LILY BELLE. I will not.

TITUS. Lily Belle!

LILY BELLE. (Swallows her pride with a distasteful gulp.) Mother, it's quite all right. I don't object to your biting me— (Crosses back to her.) gnaw and mangle me to the bone—gum me to your heart's content—only tell us what you did with our money.

MRS. SAVAGE. My money—you've already had your share.

LILY BELLE. The estate is ours. It's belonged to the Savage family for generations.

SAMUEL. Eight generations.

TITUS. It's unthinkable that you should be the first Savage to be found wanting.

MRS. SAVAGE. Found wanting what?

TITUS. The Savage pride. Now I want you to listen carefully to what I have to say. (Sits beside her as Lily Belle wanders up toward window.) The estate has always been a sacred trust. We have never considered ourselves possessors of a great fortune—but custodians of wealth—

LILY BELLE. (Puts hand to her throat and gives birth to an agonized bleat.) Oooooooh!

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