

Hannibal & Ethel

~~MRS. SAVAGE. Well, you don't need to spare me. I have to look at myself every morning.~~

~~JEFF. Doctor Emmett refuses to let me wear a bandage.~~

~~MRS. SAVAGE. Well, we have to humor our doctors once in a while.~~

HANNIBAL. And now you have met everyone. We are a small group in this wing and we hope you find us comfortable to be with.

FAIRY. But Mrs. Savage hasn't met everyone. She hasn't met the Holy Terror.

HANNIBAL. Of course. How stupid of me.

FAIRY. Where is he, Florence?

FLORENCE. Well, he was here a few moments ago. *(Turns and calls:)* John Thomas!

JEFF. He might have gone out into the hall.

FLORENCE. I'll see. *(Dashes into hallway and disappears for a moment.)* John Thomas!

FAIRY. *(Quickly to MRS. SAVAGE.)* You won't hurt her, will you?

MRS. SAVAGE. Gracious! Why should I?

JEFF. You won't object, will you?

MRS. SAVAGE. Well—what is John Thomas?

HANNIBAL. Her son. What did you think?

MRS. SAVAGE. Here?

FAIRY. Oh, yes. He was born here.

FLORENCE. *(Returns.)* I can't . . . *(She stops—smiles—and points behind sofa.)* Oh, look! Asleep on the floor. *(She comes down behind sofa.)* My husband warned me I'd be a bad mother. *(Reaches down behind sofa and picks up a doll dressed in a denim romper.)* Mrs. Savage—this is my son.

FAIRY. *(Quickly.)* You like children, don't you?

MRS. SAVAGE. Everyone's but my own. *(Looking slowly from one to the other before speaking.)* How—old is he?

FLORENCE. Five.

MRS. SAVAGE. He's big for five months.

FLORENCE. No. No. Five years.

MRS. SAVAGE. I meant years.

FLORENCE. Will you excuse me now? I have to put him to bed. *(Walks to door.)* He has measles—I do hope you won't catch them. Excuse me. *(Goes out.)*

JEFF. That was exceedingly kind of you, Mrs. Savage—not to notice anything wrong.

FAIRY. There wasn't time to explain. But you were like lightning.
HANNIBAL. Poor Florence isn't well. We pretend for her sake. We hope you will, too.

MRS. SAVAGE. Oh—I will.

HANNIBAL. I think you should understand right away, Mrs. Savage, that, except for Florence, the rest of us are free to leave here any time we want to.

JEFF. But we don't go—because there's no better place to go.

FAIRY. You're a very lucky woman to be accepted, Mrs. Savage, if I do say it myself. And I do. *(A small buzzer rings on wall above door L. It rings insistently. They all turn toward it with varying degrees of disdain.)*

HANNIBAL. Oh, do be quiet.

FAIRY. Tyrant!

MRS. SAVAGE. What is that?

JEFF. That rude noise is the signal for us to go to our rooms.

HANNIBAL. It's the evil of the machine age. Perfect pistons and no manners.

JEFF. Well—"Ours not to reason why ——" *(Stops.)* I wonder why no one ever quotes the first line. It's "Someone blundered." *(Starts out.)*

MRS. SAVAGE. Good night.

JEFF. *(Turns at door.)* I didn't hear you. We never say that. It means there's no more. *(Goes out quickly without explaining.)*

MRS. SAVAGE. *(To FAIRY.)* No more what?

FAIRY. *(Airily.)* Oh—there's no more of so much.

HANNIBAL. Don't let Jeff's manner disturb you. During the war his plane was shot down in flames. He hasn't quite recovered yet.

MRS. SAVAGE. Was his face badly burned?

HANNIBAL. Oh, not at all. Jeff bailed out. But he was the only one. He lost his crew. His scar goes deeper than we can see.

FAIRY. Surely you've guessed by now that Hannibal and I are the only guests here free to leave. We couldn't tell you that in front of the others—we pretend, to save their pride. *(MRS. PADDY rises from behind her easel with an indignant snort. With head held high, she puts her hand down and stalks from room. FAIRY rushes ahead to guard light switch.)* I'm sorry, Mrs. Paddy. I'd forgotten you were still here. I didn't mean you, anyhow. *(MRS. PADDY continues blabbering out of room. FAIRY turns to MRS. SAVAGE.)*

Oh, I could tear my tongue out. Will you excuse me? If I don't apologize, she'll sulk. (*Dasbes out after MRS. PADDY.*)

HANNIBAL. Fairy has the gift of the good for saying the wrong thing.

MRS. SAVAGE. I should think it would take a bit of doing to apologize to someone who won't talk and sulks anyhow.

HANNIBAL. You'll get used to Mrs. Paddy. Just treat her like a clock. Look at her to see how the day goes but don't expect an answer. She's happy at her easel.

MRS. SAVAGE. Is she an artist?

HANNIBAL. I don't know whether she is an artist or not. But she paints.

MRS. SAVAGE. Portraits?

HANNIBAL. Seascapes. Which is rather odd because she's never seen the ocean.

FAIRY. (*Re-enters at door briefly.*) I forgot to warn you, Mrs. Savage. Stay awake. If you go to your room—*don't sleep!* (*Disappears as quickly as she reappeared.*)

MRS. SAVAGE. (*Turns back to HANNIBAL.*) What did she mean about not sleeping?

HANNIBAL. None of us sleeps here.

MRS. SAVAGE. Where do you sleep?

HANNIBAL. We don't. Oh—we go to our rooms. We've all agreed to that in principle. But we stay awake. We never close our eyes. (*Explains as if to a child.*) When you go to sleep—today ends. And when today ends—tomorrow begins. Today we're safe. Tomorrow may be filled with disaster. (*Brightly.*) You won't catch us sleeping. Could anything be simpler?

MRS. SAVAGE. Not—much.

HANNIBAL. Today's the only certainty.

~~MISS WILLIE. (*Enters carrying Mrs. SAVAGE's suitcase.*) Hannibal—~~
~~—you heard the buzzer—why aren't you in your room?~~

~~HANNIBAL. I am in spirit. And everyone says it's the spirit that counts. (*Then to MRS. SAVAGE.*) Remember—fight the night. (*Goes out quickly.*)~~

~~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 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 dying 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~~