

Cloisters Residents

ACT II

SCENE 1

TIME: *The same night. After dinner.*

AT RISE: HANNIBAL, FLORENCE and JEFF sit at table L., playing cards. MRS. PADDY sits upstage with her back to audience, facing her canvas. For the first time we are able to look at the seascape she is painting. A single undulating line represents the vast ocean. There is nothing more. MRS. SAVAGE sits with a book and reading glasses on, downstage R. FAIRY MAY wanders about, sighing intermittently.

FAIRY. (Stops beside MRS. SAVAGE and leans over her shoulder.) Are you reading?
MRS. SAVAGE. (Looks up from her book.) Yes, dear.
FAIRY. (Walks back to look out window and return.) Is it interesting?
MRS. SAVAGE. Very.
FAIRY. I'm not disturbing you, am I?
MRS. SAVAGE. Now what ever makes you think that? (FAIRY sighs and starts away again. MRS. SAVAGE puts down her book.) What's the matter, Fairy May?
FAIRY. Nothing. It's just that no one has said they loved me this live-long day.
MRS. SAVAGE. Why, yes, they have, Fairy.
FAIRY. Oh, no they haven't. I've been waiting.
MRS. SAVAGE. I heard Florence say it at the dinner table.
FAIRY. Did she?
FLORENCE. Did I?
MRS. SAVAGE. She said, Don't eat too fast, Fairy.
FAIRY. Was that saying she loved me?
MRS. SAVAGE. Of course. People say it when they say, "Take an umbrella, it's raining"—or "Hurry back"—or even "Watch out, you'll break your neck." There're hundreds of ways of wording it—you just have to listen for it, my dear.

FAIRY. (Brightening.) My dentist said I had perfect occlusion. Do you think he was telling me he loved me?

MRS. SAVAGE. What else? Why, the first day I met my husband, I was riding horseback and he said I had a good seat. I knew immediately he loved me.

FAIRY. Oh, thank you. I've been missing so much. Oh! My dentist loves me.

MRS. SAVAGE. Now—what else would you like to have me clear up for you?

FAIRY. Nothing. I'm sorry I disturbed you. Thank you and forgive me. (MRS. SAVAGE goes back to her book.)

FLORENCE. Mrs. Savage?

MRS. SAVAGE. (Puts down book.) Yes?

FLORENCE. I'm keeping score and the boys won't help me. What's seven and five and four?

MRS. SAVAGE. Forty-nine.

HANNIBAL. But, Mrs. Savage —

MRS. SAVAGE. It's my own system, Hannibal. I refuse to submit to the tyranny of mathematics. (Goes back to her book.)

FLORENCE. Then I win.

HANNIBAL. I'll keep score after this.

FAIRY. (Comes back to stand beside MRS. SAVAGE.) Mrs. Savage?

MRS. SAVAGE. (Lowers book again.) Yes, Fairy?

FAIRY. May I interrupt you a moment?

MRS. SAVAGE. Of course.

FAIRY. There is one other thing you can clear up for me. Why is it suddenly Sunday again when it was Sunday only yesterday?

MRS. SAVAGE. Why do you think it's Sunday?

FAIRY. If your children are coming to see you—it must be Sunday, because that's visitors' day. I guess I had an awfully good time this week.

MRS. SAVAGE. It isn't Sunday, Fairy. My brood are coming back because they couldn't wait a week.

FAIRY. That should make you happy.

MRS. SAVAGE. It should but it doesn't. (Puts book down and crosses to card game.)

FAIRY. Excuse me. Don't you like them?

MRS. SAVAGE. Not at all.

FLORENCE. Oh, I think that's a wicked thing to say.

MRS. SAVAGE. Well, we have to be wicked once in a while to get

God's attention. But if it consoles you, Florence—they were not mine. My husband was left with three small children. (*Stands looking over FLORENCE'S shoulder.*)

FLORENCE. But you must have liked them when they were little?

MRS. SAVAGE. Oh, I wanted to make them my own, desperately. But they always resented me. Why, the first time I put my arms around Lily Belle, she bit me—and she bit me every day until she was ten.

FAIRY. That must have made you very highstrung.

HANNIBAL. What stopped her at the exact age of ten?

MRS. SAVAGE. I suppose at ten a girl begins to consider her teeth.

FLORENCE. But the boys—boys are always so much better.

MRS. SAVAGE. Not always. They'd been spoiled by money. And whenever I tried to correct them, they'd break something I treasured, to get even with me. It was a happy day when they went away to school.

JEFF. School must have taught them something.

MRS. SAVAGE. Yes—French. After that, whenever they came home, they spoke nothing but French so I couldn't understand them. And I haven't understood them since.

FLORENCE. But you must be proud of them now. The Senator is quite famous, isn't he?

MRS. SAVAGE. That he is—make no mistake. I'm told he gets more threatening telegrams than any other man in Congress. I believe Western Union lists him as a tangible asset.

JEFF. If he's so unpopular, why do the voters keep sending him back to Washington?

MRS. SAVAGE. They're no fools. It's the only way to keep him out of the State.

JEFF. The other son's a judge, isn't he?

FAIRY. That's a distinction.

MRS. SAVAGE. He's made it one. He has the distinction of having had more of his decisions reversed than any man in jurisprudence.

FAIRY. Is the daughter pretty, Mrs. Savage?

MRS. SAVAGE. Well, there's a picture of her in the paper—I'll show it to you and you can judge for yourself. (*Starts for newspaper on sofa.*)

FLORENCE. (*Rises.*) Oh, don't read us anything out of the paper, please.

MRS. SAVAGE. I won't. I'll just show you her picture.

HANNIBAL. (*Rises.*) We don't look at pictures, either.

FLORENCE. People are always pinned under trucks.

FAIRY. I'll peek first to make sure it isn't horrible.

MRS. SAVAGE. (*Folds paper.*) Well—even I don't say it's horrible.

FAIRY. (*Glances at picture and shrieks.*) Oh! She's a queen! She's wearing a crown!

FLORENCE. Oh—a queen?

MRS. SAVAGE. That's a tiara, Fairy. It's an old picture taken when she was married to her Slovak Prince.

JEFF. Let's take a quick look, Hannibal, just to be polite. (*All cross to MRS. SAVAGE and look.*)

FAIRY. Then she's a Princess?

MRS. SAVAGE. No—she discarded the Prince a good six husbands ago.

FAIRY. Oh, but why?

MRS. SAVAGE. Hell hath no music like a woman playing second fiddle.

FAIRY. But she kept the tiara?

MRS. SAVAGE. Indeed she did. I suspect she sleeps in it.

FLORENCE. I don't know when I've seen a prettier tiara.

HANNIBAL. The dress is cut rather low, isn't it?

FAIRY. I don't like her. Let's do something mean to her.

FLORENCE. Why, Fairy!

FAIRY. Oh, I don't mean really mean—something like—like putting her picture on the dart board and throwing darts at it.

HANNIBAL. Fairy!

MRS. SAVAGE. My dear—you're a sweet child. That's exactly what we'll do. (*Starts tearing out picture.*)

FLORENCE. Oh, you wouldn't.

MRS. SAVAGE. I need exercise, my dear.

FLORENCE. Fairy—you're an evil girl to think up such a thing.

FAIRY. Don't you talk to me like that—I'm sensitive!

MRS. SAVAGE. Leave her alone, Florence. I'm the culprit. Let's see—now what can I pin it up with?

FAIRY. Mrs. Paddy has some thumbtacks.

FLORENCE. Oh, Fairy, I'm so disappointed in you.

FAIRY. I wish I had died in my cradle.

MRS. SAVAGE. (*Crosses to MRS. PADDY.*) Mrs. Paddy—that's the loveliest seascape I've ever seen. Do you know, I can actually smell the ocean? (*MRS. PADDY beams.*) I think your genius lies in

your simplicity—you challenge the imagination. (MRS. PADDY nods agreement.) Could I borrow four thumbtacks? (MRS. PADDY hands her four thumbtacks.) Thank you. (Crosses to dart board.)

FLORENCE. It's setting a very bad example for motherhood.

MRS. SAVAGE. Do stop worrying, Florence. (Pins the picture on dart board.) Don't you like surprises?

FLORENCE. Yes.

MRS. SAVAGE. Well, I want to surprise Lily Belle. I'll tee off. (They gather behind her.) Now—target for tonight. (She throws a dart.) Right in the tiara!

FLORENCE. Something dreadful is going to happen, I know. (As MRS. SAVAGE takes out dart, MISS WILLIE enters.)

MISS WILLIE. Everybody to the upstairs study. Mrs. Savage's visitors are here.

FAIRY. (Rushes over to MISS WILLIE.) Miss Willie—may I stay? I never meet strangers any more. Please let me.

MISS WILLIE. I'm sorry, Fairy—but the Senator insisted on privacy. Hurry now—everybody out.

FAIRY. (Following others out.) Some day when I'm ordered out—I'm just going to go without saying a word. I have as much pride as anyone.

MISS WILLIE. (Leans into hallway.) All the way upstairs now. (Closes sliding doors and crosses back to L.)

MRS. SAVAGE. How's the weather out there?

MISS WILLIE. (Smiling.) Stormy. (Goes out. MRS. SAVAGE crosses to desk and picks up a piece of paper. She writes on it hurriedly and, folding note, thrusts it down front of her dress. Goes back c. and tosses another dart. MISS WILLIE comes in, holding door open.) Here are your visitors, Mrs. Savage. (SAMUEL, TITUS and LILY BELLE enter—martyred and angry.)

LILY BELLE. That will be all. You can wait outside.

MISS WILLIE. (Takes latch off door.) I'll leave the latch off and wait at the hall desk. (Goes out.)

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 bear's 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!