

# Miss Willie & Ethel

FAIRY. Except in January—the rooms get a little cold.  
FLORENCE. We like you already.  
MRS. SAVAGE. It isn't that I don't find you—enchanted, but—  
(She flounders.) but you—  
FLORENCE. But we what?  
FAIRY. Please don't say anything mean. (Buzzer on wall begins to signal. MRS. SAVAGE is forgotten as they turn to it.) Oh, do be still!  
FLORENCE. We have to go, Mrs. Savage.  
MRS. SAVAGE. But—where?  
HANNIBAL. It's Garden Hour.  
FLORENCE. We each have a little plot and we plant things. You can plant anything you wish—vegetables or flowers.  
FAIRY. Last year I planted bird seed to see what would come up.  
FLORENCE. What did come up, Fairy?  
FAIRY. Nothing. But it was a rich horticultural experience.  
HANNIBAL. There's a beautiful evergreen in the center. At Christmas it has lights on it saying "Merry Christmas—Keep Out."  
FLORENCE. (Waiting at door with rest of group.) Come with us, Mrs. Savage. I'll show you my delphiniums.  
MRS. SAVAGE. No—please go without me. I have some serious thinking to do. I'll just stay here. (Begins pacing the room—methodically staying on edge of carpet.)  
JEFF. But the buzzer buzzed. One has to obey orders. (They stop at door and watch MRS. SAVAGE a moment.)  
HANNIBAL. May I ask why you're doing that, Mrs. Savage?  
MRS. SAVAGE. (Laughs.) Oh, I believe in wearing a carpet out evenly.  
FAIRY. (Delighted.) Oh, how prudent. (Comes back and falls in behind MRS. SAVAGE.) I'm going to help you.  
MRS. SAVAGE. But don't you have to garden?  
FAIRY. This is more constructive.  
FLORENCE. (Falls in behind FAIRY.) I'll help, too. We must all do our share.  
MRS. SAVAGE. But I didn't mean to start a procession.  
FAIRY. (To HANNIBAL and JEFF.) Come, boys, many feet make light work.  
HANNIBAL. (To JEFF.) Why not? It's a refreshing change—most women lead us in circles.  
FAIRY. Go ahead, Mrs. Savage. We're behind you.

MRS. SAVAGE. But . . . (Reluctantly, she leads her followers around carpet.) I feel like the Pied Piper. (MISS WILLIE enters carrying a vase of flowers. Accustomed to anomalous behavior, she crosses and puts vase on a table L. without comment.)  
FAIRY. You step on leaves, Jeff—Hannibal can take buds—Mrs. Savage can have roses—and the rest of us will walk on thorns. Do you know what we're doing, Miss Willie?  
MISS WILLIE. Wearing out the carpet evenly.  
FAIRY. Oh, someone told you.  
MISS WILLIE. Didn't I hear the buzzer ring Garden Hour?  
FAIRY. I didn't hear it. I think it's broken.  
MISS WILLIE. (Stands in front of FAIRY.) Fairy—aren't you ashamed?  
FAIRY. Oh, I wish I were dead.  
MRS. SAVAGE. I'm afraid this is my fault, Miss Willie.  
FLORENCE. I didn't feel like gardening anyhow.  
MISS WILLIE. But you've worked so hard with your flowers. Do you want them to die, Florence?  
FLORENCE. (Stricken.) I don't want anything to die. (Hurries out.)  
FAIRY. (Explains to MRS. SAVAGE.) Oh, that's so true. Florence wouldn't hurt a fly. She catches them and puts them out the window. (Flies across her.)  
MISS WILLIE. I think we'd all better go out and work in the garden. Fairy—share your seeds with Mrs. Savage. Run along, now. (All leave quickly. MRS. SAVAGE remains.) Aren't you going with them, Mrs. Savage?  
MRS. SAVAGE. I wanted to speak to you—alone.  
MISS WILLIE. All right. What can I do for you?  
MRS. SAVAGE. A great deal. And it might be that I can do a great deal for you.  
MISS WILLIE. Are you about to offer me a bribe, Mrs. Savage?  
MRS. SAVAGE. (Pauses.) How did you guess?  
MISS WILLIE. Everyone does—at first.  
MRS. SAVAGE. Still, my offer is a little different. I have the money. I'll give you twenty thousand to leave that door open tonight. (MISS WILLIE smiles.) Thirty thousand.  
MISS WILLIE. Don't you like us, Mrs. Savage?  
MRS. SAVAGE. That's a most irritating answer to a sound business

offer, my dear. Forty thousand. You could be free of this place too.

MISS WILLIE. But I don't want to be free of it.

MRS. SAVAGE. Fifty thousand. You could go around the world—see Cairo—Mandalay—the South Pacific.

MISS WILLIE. But I've seen Cairo—I've been to Mandalay and the South Pacific.

MRS. SAVAGE. You have?

MISS WILLIE. I had four years as an army nurse.

MRS. SAVAGE. Still—you should be able to use fifty thousand dollars.

MISS WILLIE. Now where would you get fifty thousand dollars, Mrs. Savage? That's a fortune.

MRS. SAVAGE. Never mind—I can get it. And in the current idiom—fifty thousand is peanuts.

MISS WILLIE. Oh, I believe you—but I'm afraid I have to refuse.

MRS. SAVAGE. Then you leave me no choice but to burn the place down. *(Crosses toward door.)*

MISS WILLIE. Oh, you wouldn't do that.

MRS. SAVAGE. Oh, yes, I would.

MISS WILLIE. Too many people here wouldn't know how to save themselves. You'd think of them first.

MRS. SAVAGE. If you believe I belong here—why are you appealing to my reason?

MISS WILLIE. I wasn't. I was appealing to your emotions.

MRS. SAVAGE. Well, I'm going to get out quickly enough. It's just that bribing you would have been cheaper. Now it'll cost me a couple of million at least. *(She turns and goes out. MISS WILLIE begins to straighten the room. DR. EMMETT lets himself in at L. and comes down to MISS WILLIE.)*

MISS WILLIE. Good morning, Doctor.

DR. EMMETT. Good morning. Is Mrs. Savage downstairs?

MISS WILLIE. She just this minute went out to the garden.

DR. EMMETT. What is her state of mind this morning?

MISS WILLIE. The usual pattern. She's already offered me a bribe.

DR. EMMETT. What did she offer you?

MISS WILLIE. *(Laughs.)* The highest yet. Fifty thousand—the poor dear!

DR. EMMETT. Did she sound confident?

MISS WILLIE. Definitely manic. She talked as if she still controlled her own affairs.

DR. EMMETT. Apparently she does. Read this. *(Hands her a newspaper.)* I've just been talking to her children—they're practically out of their minds themselves. The Senator is leaving Washington at once—he'll pick up his sister in New York and the Judge in Boston and be here by tonight.

MISS WILLIE. *(Looks up from paper.)* This is the most amazing story I've ever read. When did they discover it?

DR. EMMETT. I gather this morning. They asked me to confine her to her room.

MISS WILLIE. I don't understand it—how could she get away with so much money?

DR. EMMETT. Apparently her husband left the estate to her. She's been secretly selling out control ever since.

MISS WILLIE. Ten million dollars—that's a typographical error, isn't it?

DR. EMMETT. No, they had it all right.

MISS WILLIE. But what could she have done with it?

DR. EMMETT. As her son says, God knows.

MISS WILLIE. Could she have spent it?

DR. EMMETT. I doubt it. Will you call her, please? I'd better tell her what to expect.

MISS WILLIE. *(Calls out window.)* Oh, Mrs. Savage—would you come in, please? Doctor Emmett wants to see you. *(Turns back to DR. EMMETT.)* Are you going to place her in seclusion?

DR. EMMETT. Of course not. But sometimes I wish there was a way of placing relations in seclusion. They are always much more trouble than patients.

MISS WILLIE. Do you think she knows what happened to the money?

DR. EMMETT. If she does—she's the only one.

MISS WILLIE. Is there any possibility that there's method in her madness?

~~DR. EMMETT. Miss Willie, I find it harder every day to say exactly where reason ends and madness begins. For the moment I must accept the presumptive evidence of her step-children.~~

~~MISS WILLIE. Well—from what I've heard, her son's record in Congress would give any good psychiatrist a nasty turn.~~

~~DR. EMMETT. It certainly would—and the sensationalism of her~~