

# Dr. Emmett

Mrs. Savage. (MISS WILLIE follows calmly, carrying tray with coffee service. FLORENCE and HANNIBAL follow.)

MISS WILLIE. Fairy—what am I going to do with you!

FLORENCE. You've put me right off my coffee.

MISS WILLIE. You know there's no rat in the hall.

FAIRY. But Mrs. Savage doesn't. She's bored here and I intend to make life exciting for her.

MRS. SAVAGE. Thank you, Fairy. You'll be happy to know that I just aged fifty years. That puts me well over the hundred mark.

FAIRY. Oh, when we must have a birthday party. I'll make candles.

MISS WILLIE. You'll sit down quietly and drink your coffee.

HANNIBAL. Oh, dear—I ate too much again. (Stands upstage and begins bending over, trying to touch his toes.)

FLORENCE. You shouldn't exercise right after a meal, Hannibal.

HANNIBAL. I know, but if I wait till I'm comfortable—my conscience won't needle me.

MRS. SAVAGE. (Goes up to MISS WILLIE.) Are you sure there've been no calls or messages for me today?

MISS WILLIE. Positive.

MRS. SAVAGE. Well—is it possible to send to the village and get tonight's—(Whispers.) newspaper?

MISS WILLIE. Well, if you'll serve the coffee, I'll ask Doctor Emmett.

MRS. SAVAGE. Gladly.

MISS WILLIE. (Takes cup already poured over to JEFF, seated on piano stool.) Here you are, Bingo.

JEFF. Florence hasn't been served.

FLORENCE. Don't stand on manners, Jeff—Miss Willie knows just how you like your coffee. I'll get my own.

JEFF. Very well. Thank you.

MISS WILLIE. You're annoyed.

JEFF. You single me out for attention, Miss Willie. It's not fair and it makes me uncomfortable.

MISS WILLIE. Jeff—I'm so tired tonight—I didn't remember. You'll have to forgive me.

JEFF. (Smiles.) Of course. I forget, too. (MISS WILLIE does out L. MRS. SAVAGE takes over coffee service. FAIRY wanders to mirror and looks at herself.)

FAIRY. Mirror, mirror on the wall—who is the best dressed of them all? (Listens attentively.) Fairy who?

MRS. SAVAGE. Cream in your coffee, Fairy?

FAIRY. Please. Do you think this dress does anything for me? I made it myself.

MRS. SAVAGE. It's sheer delight, Fairy. Sugar?

FAIRY. Five. (Crosses to take cup.) There wasn't time to finish it. I put it together with pins.

MRS. SAVAGE. Hannibal?

HANNIBAL. No, thank you. (Bends over again.)

MRS. SAVAGE. Would you like to know a trick to make that exercise enjoyable, Hannibal?

HANNIBAL. An enjoyable way of losing weight has yet to be invented.

MRS. SAVAGE. Well—I know of an improvement. (Opens a drawer in table.) All you need is a deck of cards.

FAIRY. I went to a fortune teller when I was fourteen. Everything he told me turned out wrong. I never believed in cards after that.

FLORENCE. Fairy—Fairy—Fairy!

MRS. SAVAGE. (Takes deck of cards, hands them to HANNIBAL.) Throw them up in the air.

HANNIBAL. (Backs away.) Why?

MRS. SAVAGE. To lose weight. (Tosses deck into the air. Cards fall scattered on floor.) Now all you have to do is lean over and pick them up again. One by one.

FAIRY. Oh, I like that—it's tidy.

MRS. SAVAGE. I learned it in a beauty course.

HANNIBAL. Thank you, Mrs. Savage. (As he picks up cards.) It's a great improvement.

FAIRY. Wouldn't it be easier to pick them up sideways?

HANNIBAL. Much. Man was made all wrong. His stomach should be in back. When he bends—it's in the way. When he kneels, his legs buckle out instead of folding neatly behind him. And why should his nose be in front? It only gets in the way when he kisses.

FAIRY. Oh, you're so right!

HANNIBAL. I guess God was in a hurry. (Does so, opens and DR. EMMETT enters.)

DR. EMMETT. Well, Hannibal—what are we doing now?

HANNIBAL. We're losing weight.

DR. EMMETT. Well, would you postpone it for a little while? (Turns to others.) Would you all go upstairs to the study for a

few moments? I want to talk to Mrs. Savage. Florence, would you take the coffee up with you?

FLORENCE. (*Starts for door with tray.*) Oh, I do hate having coffee upstairs—it's so middle-class. (*Looks around.*) Where is John Thomas?

JEFF. I think you left him up on the phonograph, Florence.

FLORENCE. Oh, yes—he adores the classics.

FAIRY. Upstairs—downstairs—till I think I'll scream. May I stay, Dr. Emmet, no, you may not. (*All leave. DR. EMMETT turns to MRS. SAVAGE.*)

DR. EMMETT. Miss Willie tells me you seem anxious to see to-night's papers. Why?

MRS. SAVAGE. Habit.

DR. EMMETT. Here they are. (*Hands her a paper. She takes it to sofa.*) It will undoubtedly please you to know that you've caused considerable trouble again.

MRS. SAVAGE. Have I? (*Opening paper.*) Oh—Titus—on the front page. (*Reads.*) "Senator trapped in White House hot-house."

DR. EMMETT. I've just been talking to him. He's exceedingly angry.

MRS. SAVAGE. Imagine—pulling up all those petunias! What will everyone think?

DR. EMMETT. As a result of this, your position here has deteriorated considerably.

MRS. SAVAGE. And my disposition has blossomed enormously. Anything about Samuel?

DR. EMMETT. Oh, yes. (*Hands her a second paper.*) Here's the *Boston Post*.

MRS. SAVAGE. (*Reads it with delight.*) Dear, oh dear! Poor Samuel. All those bricks right on top of him. (*Reads.*) "Chimney collapses on Boston jurist." (*Looks up cheerfully.*) Well, for some people—it takes a ton of bricks, you know.

DR. EMMETT. How could they possibly have believed you?

MRS. SAVAGE. They should be committed, shouldn't they? (*Turns the pages.*) Nothing about Lily Belle?

DR. EMMETT. (*Handing her a third paper.*) Your batting average for mischief is a hundred per cent, Mrs. Savage.

MRS. SAVAGE. (*Takes paper.*) What a horrible picture of Lily Belle! This would frighten even Fairy.

DR. EMMETT. According to this, she resisted arrest.

MRS. SAVAGE. So I see. "Female Vandal Invades Museum. Berserk Heiress Bites Police." (*Looks up.*) Now they really are fools, aren't they, Doctor?

DR. EMMETT. What do you hope to gain, Mrs. Savage?

MRS. SAVAGE. Better terms.

DR. EMMETT. For your freedom?

MRS. SAVAGE. For my husband's Memorial Fund.

DR. EMMETT. Your children believe that money can be put to better use.

MRS. SAVAGE. Of course—their own. Lily Belle settled over a million dollars on her six husbands. Samuel and Titus spent as much to secure jobs to which they had no right. Is that better use?

DR. EMMETT. They consider your Memorial Fund most unorthodox, Mrs. Savage.

MRS. SAVAGE. That's absurd. There are plenty of charities for foolish people in desperate need, and none for people with a desperate need to be foolish.

DR. EMMETT. What brought you to that conclusion?

MRS. SAVAGE. My own life. No matter what we have, we never forget the foolish things we never got. I'm sure that if Hannibal had been given a violin when he wanted one, he wouldn't need one now.

DR. EMMETT. That's quite possible.

MRS. SAVAGE. I want my husband to be remembered with warmth and gratitude for a few foolish dreams that came true. I will not give up my Memorial to him.

DR. EMMETT. I want to discuss this with you further—but at the moment you have visitors waiting. ~~(Saves her door.) You may come in now, Senator. (Stands aside to let TITUS, LILY BELLE and SAMUEL enter. SAMUEL's arm is in a sling.) I'll be just outside —if you want me. (Steps out, leaving them alone. No one speaks for a moment.)~~

MRS. SAVAGE. My headache's gone.

LILY BELLE. How dare you make a fool of me! How dare you!

SAMUEL. You tried to kill me. You knew that old chimney would fall if I started pulling bricks out—didn't you?

MRS. SAVAGE. We're really not a very bright family, are we?

TITUS. Oh, you must be proud indeed to see the name of Savage held up to ridicule again!

MRS. SAVAGE. Did you dig, Titus?