

Samuel (Titus/Ethel/Lily Belle)

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. Ha!

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. Ber-serk 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. (Goes to 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?

TITUS. Eight F. B. I. men jumped me—pushed my face in the dirt. Thought I was planting a bomb.

LILY BELLE. Why didn't you tell the papers the truth? I did. (Picks up one of the papers and reads.) "Sleep-walking." Really!

TITUS. (Snatches papers away from her.) You try to think of an excuse with eight men on your chest!

MRS. SAVAGE. She'd love the chance.

TITUS. (Reading.) "It was learned today that the Senator's mother, Mrs. Ethel P. Savage, the actress, was recently committed for irresponsible actions. Democratic leaders were quick to point out that this might explain the career of strange behavior in Congress by the Senator." (Hurls paper to the floor.) Do you realize what this does to me politically?

MRS. SAVAGE. Makes you a *mort canard*. "Dead Duck"—French—remember?

TITUS. I'll never survive it—never.

LILY BELLE. They treated me like a common criminal! I was fingerprinted!

MRS. SAVAGE. Oh, I meant to ask you, Lily Belle—what is in a stuffed porpoise?

TITUS. Do you know what the papers call us now?

SAMUEL. The Mad Savages.

MRS. SAVAGE. How do you like it?

TITUS. What happened to those bonds!

MRS. SAVAGE. What happened to your dignity?

LILY BELLE. Where is my money?

MRS. SAVAGE. Where is your self-respect?

TITUS. May I ask just what you intend to do now?

MRS. SAVAGE. Are you ready to listen to my terms—or would you care to dig in Grant's Tomb?

TITUS. We are prepared to compromise.

MRS. SAVAGE. If that means you'll see things my way—then "compromise" is the right word.

TITUS. I will consider effecting your release in the custody of someone for a period of time. It would look better for us.

LILY BELLE. And I'd be willing to give her complete freedom if she'd give up acting and lead a dignified life.

MRS. SAVAGE. Freedom—as Titus can tell you—is the right to make the wrong choice.

TITUS. What would we get?

MRS. SAVAGE. That's what I like about you, Titus—no nonsense. You will each receive a reasonable yearly allowance.

SAMUEL. How reasonable?

MRS. SAVAGE. I shall be generous. But the bulk of the estate *must* be given away by my Fund.

LILY BELLE. It's completely mad.

TITUS. We might have the commitment revoked only to have you play another trick on us. Where would we be then?

MRS. SAVAGE. Where are you now?

LILY BELLE. Get it over with, Titus. (Goes to window seat, picks up magazine.)

TITUS. Very well. (Turns to SAMUEL.) Write a retraction, Samuel.

SAMUEL. (Takes out fountain pen.) I'm tired of having my decisions reversed.

MRS. SAVAGE. When I'm released, I'll keep my promise. But I warn you—don't have me followed.

LILY BELLE. Samuel—wait a minute!

TITUS. What is it?

LILY BELLE. I've found the answer . . . on the cover of this medical journal.

TITUS. What are you talking about!

LILY BELLE. A way to avoid your compromise. (Folds magazine.) But I have to see Dr. Emmett first. (Starts for door.)

MRS. SAVAGE. Are you going to sign that petition, Lily Belle?

LILY BELLE. Titus—don't you sign *anything* until I come back. (Goes out quickly.)

TITUS. Lily Belle! (Turns to SAMUEL.) What could she have read?

SAMUEL. God knows.

MRS. SAVAGE. Something to trick you. If you listen to her again, you'll end up without a cent.

SAMUEL. What'll I do?

TITUS. Finish it. Lily Belle has got us into trouble enough.

MRS. SAVAGE. And be quick. Your and Samuel's signature will be enough.

SAMUEL. (Begins to write—and stops.) How many T's in "Commitment"?

TITUS. Three.

MRS. SAVAGE. Two.

SAMUEL. (Studies it.) It doesn't look right.

TITUS. (Snatches paper from him.) I'll write it. Give me your pen.

55
Samuel: Give it Back