

FAIRY. No, no, no, no. Musicians shouldn't work. (*Turns to the books again.*)

FLORENCE. Be careful, Fairy—don't get dust in your eyes.

FAIRY. (*Reaches vainly, then turns back to Jeff.*) Wouldn't you like *Animal Husbandry*? I can reach that.

JEFF. This time it's got to be *The Life Span of the Ape*.

HANNIBAL. (*Hands violin bow to Fairy.*) Goose it out with this. (*In the midst of concentrated activity beside the bookcase, Mrs. Paddy enters and stands at doorway R. She is a dumpy, middle-aged woman of awesome ferocity. Her close-cropped hair bristles from her head with aggressive hostility. She is wearing a paint-smeared smock. She takes in the scene unobserved. She reaches for light switch and plunges the room into darkness. Hannibal shouts.*) Lights! Turn the lights back on!

FAIRY. Don't let me fall!

HANNIBAL. Please turn the lights back on.

FLORENCE. Hannibal, get to the switch before someone is hurt.

JEFF. (*Pause.*) It looks like Mrs. Paddy is back. (*Lights suddenly go on again. Facing Mrs. Paddy at light switch is Miss Wilhelmina. "Miss Willie" is an efficient and attractive girl of about twenty-four. She wears a tailored gray-blue suit with a flower in her lapel. Mrs. Paddy eyes her resentfully. The picture is held for a moment, and then Mrs. Paddy reaches out quickly and plunges the room into darkness again.*)

HANNIBAL. Lights! Lights! Lights!

FLORENCE. Please, Mrs. Paddy, let us keep the lights on. (*Miss Willie promptly turns lights on and protects switch with her palm. She reaches out with her other hand and, taking Mrs. Paddy's elbow, propels her toward window seat C., where an easel stands with the front of the canvas facing upstage. Mrs. Paddy sits down out of sight behind it.*)

MISS WILLIE. Some night you're going to turn out the lights at the wrong time and hurt somebody. Then you'll be sorry. I do wish you'd chosen something else to give up for Lent.

JEFF. It's unfair to make the rest of us suffer to get you to heaven, Mrs. Paddy.

FAIRY. Other people *like* electricity.

MISS WILLIE. Now you sit at your easel like a good girl. And leave the lights alone.

FAIRY. I must say you startled us, Miss Willie. We thought you were in the front office.

MISS WILLIE. (*Turns to look at Fairy, who stands on chair with bow in her hand.*) For the love of Pete, Fairy, what are you up to?

FAIRY. I was just trying to get a book for Jeffrey.

MISS WILLIE. With a violin bow?

FAIRY. I couldn't quite reach it.

JEFF. I certainly didn't mean to cause all this commotion. Forget it.

FAIRY. No—no—no. I'll get it for you. (*She turns back to shelf.*) Everyone watch his own head. Timber! (*Pulls book out of the case with bow, and it falls to the floor.*) There you are, Jeffrey. (*To Miss Willie.*) You may take the bow, Miss Willie. (*To Hannibal.*) You may take my hand, Hannibal. (*She steps down from chair.*)

MISS WILLIE. The next time anyone wants a book from the top, Fairy, call me. Why, the whole shelf might have fallen on you. (*Crosses R. to replace chair at desk.*)

FAIRY. (*Following.*) Oh, who ever heard of anyone being hurt by good books?

MISS WILLIE. Enough of them might, darling. And I'd hate that to happen.

MRS. PADDY. (*Rises from behind easel and announces to no one in particular.*) I hate everything in the world, but most of all I hate cold cream, hot dogs, codfish, crawfish, catfish, catnip, sheepdip, sawdust, subways, sewers, skewers, buttermilk, caterpillars, frictions, fractions, pins, puns, pens, policemen and electricity. (*The others pay no attention to Mrs. Paddy's recital and continue as if she had made no statement. She sits down again.*)

FAIRY. Miss Willie, how much longer do we have to wait?

FLORENCE. What is she like, Miss Willie?

MISS WILLIE. I haven't seen her. Let's tidy the room a bit. (*Stops at sofa and hands bow to Hannibal.*) Fairy, will you put the Parcheesi board away, please?

FLORENCE. They're taking an awfully long time in the front office.

FAIRY. Is she young or old, Miss Willie?

MISS WILLIE. (*Straightening the room.*) All I know is that her name is Savage—and she gets the Blue Room.

FAIRY. I hope she isn't beautiful. Competition exhausts me. (*She picks up small table with the Parcheesi board and carries it upstage.*)

MISS WILLIE. (*Stops in front of Jeff and adjusts his tie.*) Well, Bingo, you tied that one in a hurry.

JEFF. (*Patiently.*) Miss Willie, don't call me that—please. It's a pet name my wife uses.

MISS WILLIE. I forgot. (*Leans over and kisses him on the forehead.*)

JEFF. And I wish you wouldn't single me out to kiss.

MISS WILLIE. You're the handsomest.

JEFF. What would my wife think if she came to call and saw a strange woman kissing me? She'd explode.

MISS WILLIE. She would if I know her.

JEFF. Will you please try to remember?

MISS WILLIE. I'll try. Forgive me. (*House phone on desk rings. Miss Willie sighs, and crosses toward it.*)

FAIRY. Ting-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling. (*Picks up receiver and holds it out for Miss Willie.*)

MISS WILLIE. (*Takes phone.*) Hello. Yes, Doctor Emmett. Right away. (*She hands receiver back to Fairy.*) Put the dart board up, Hannibal. Please don't clutter the place, darlings. Let's make a good first impression. (*Starts out.*)

FAIRY. Will we meet her now?

MISS WILLIE. I don't know. (*Takes a key from her dress pocket, unlocks door L. and goes out, closing it behind her with a click. Fairy follows to door and stands looking at it.*)

FAIRY. We haven't had anyone exciting here since that magician's wife. Remember—she was all nerves from being sawed in half so much. What was her name?

HANNIBAL. (*Hanging dart board on U.S. wall.*) Something hyphenated.

FAIRY. I forget. But she had color. My relations are all so drab. Both my parents were albinos.