

"THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA"

By

Tennessee Williams

EXT. OUTSIDE COSTA VERDE HOTEL - DAY

FADE IN

THE TITLE ''TENNESSEE WILLIAMS'S THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA''  
FADES IN AND OUT ON THE SUPERIMPOSED SCREEN. ONCE THE TITLE  
FADES OUT THE FILM BEGINS.

There are sounds of a party of excited female tourists arriving by bus on the road down the hill below the Costa Verde Hotel. Mrs. Maxine Faulk, the proprietor of the hotel, comes around the turn of the verandah. She is a stout, swarthy woman in her middle forties--affable and rapaciously lusty. She is wearing a pair of Levis and a blouse that is half unbuttoned. She is followed by Pedro, a Mexican of about twenty--slim and attractive. He is an employee in the hotel and also her casual lover. Pedro is stuffing his shirt under the belt of his pants and sweating as if he had been working hard in the sun. Mrs. Faulk looks down the hill and is pleased by the sight of someone coming up from the tourist bus below.

MAXINE [calling out]:

Shannon! [A man's voice from below  
answers: "Hi!"] Hah! [Maxine always  
laughs with a single harsh, loud  
bark, opening her mouth like a seal  
expecting a fish to be thrown to  
it.] My spies told me that you were  
back under the border! [To Pedro.]

Anda, hombre, anda!

[Maxine's delight expands and vibrates in her as Shannon labors up the hill to the hotel. He does not appear on the jungle path for a minute or two after the shouting between them starts.]

MAXINE:

Hah! My spies told me you went

through Saltillo last week with a  
busload of women—a whole busload of  
females, all females, hah! How many  
you laid so far? Hah!

SHANNON [from below, panting]:  
Great Caesar's ghost . . . stop . .  
. shouting!

MAXINE:  
No wonder your ass is draggin', hah!

SHANNON:  
Tell the kid to help me up with this  
bag.

MAXINE [shouting directions]:  
Pedro! Anda—la maléta. Pancho, no  
seas flojo! Va y trae el equipaje  
del señor.

[Pancho, another young Mexican, comes around the verandah  
and trots down the jungle path. Pedro has climbed up a  
coconut tree with a machete and is chopping down nuts for  
rum-cocos.]

SHANNON [shouting, below]:

Fred? Hey, Fred!

MAXINE [with a momentary gravity]:  
Fred can't hear you, Shannon. [She  
goes over and picks up a coconut,  
shaking it against her ear to see if  
it has milk in it.]

SHANNON [still below]:

Where is Fred-gone fishing?

[Maxine lops the end off a coconut with the machete, as Pancho trots up to the verandah with Shannon's bag—a beat-up Gladstone covered with travel stickers from all over the world. Then Shannon appears, in a crumpled white linen suit. He is panting, sweating and wild-eyed. About thirty-five, Shannon is "black Irish." His nervous state is terribly apparent; he is a young man who has cracked up before and is going to crack up again—perhaps repeatedly.]

MAXINE:

Well! Lemme look at you!

SHANNON:

Don't look at me, get dressed!

MAXINE:

Gee, you look like you had it!

SHANNON:

You look like you been having it,  
too. Get dressed!

MAXINE:

Hell, I'm dressed. I never dress in  
September. Don't you know I never  
dress in September?

SHANNON:

Well, just, just-button your shirt  
up.

MAXINE:

How long you been off it, Shannon?

SHANNON:

Off what?

MAXINE:

The wagon . . .

SHANNON:

Hell, I'm dizzy with fever. Hundred  
and three this morning in  
Cuernavaca.

MAXINE:

Watcha got wrong with you?

SHANNON:

Fever . . . fever . . . Where's  
Fred?

MAXINE:

Dead.

SHANNON:

Did you say dead?

MAXINE:

That's what I said. Fred is dead.

SHANNON:

How?

MAXINE:

Less'n two weeks ago, Fred cut his  
hand on a fishhook, it got infected,  
infection got in his blood stream,  
and he was dead inside of fortyeight  
hours. [To Pancho.] Vete!

SHANNON:

Holy smoke. . . .

MAXINE:

I can't quite realize it yet. . . .

SHANNON:

You don't seem—inconsolable about  
it.

MAXINE:

Fred was an old man, baby. Ten years  
older'n me. We hadn't had sex  
together in. . . .

SHANNON:

What's that got to do with it?

MAXINE:

Lie down and have a rum-coco.

SHANNON:

No, no. I want a cold beer. If I  
start drinking rum-cocos now I won't  
stop drinking rum-cocos. So Fred is  
dead? I looked forward to lying in  
this hammock and talking to Fred.

MAXINE:

Well Fred's not talking now,  
Shannon. A diabetic gets a blood  
infection, he goes like that without  
a decent hospital in less'n a week.  
[A bus horn is heard blowing from  
below.] Why don't your busload of  
women come on up here? They're

blowing the bus horn down there.

SHANNON:

Let 'em blow it, blow it. . . . [He sways a little.] I got a fever. [He goes to the top of the path, divides the flowering bushes and shouts down the hill to the bus.] Hank! Hank! Get them out of the bus and bring 'em up here! Tell 'em the rates are OK. Tell 'em the. . . . [His voice gives out, and he stumbles back to the verandah, where he sinks down onto the low steps, panting.]

Absolutely the worst party I've ever been out with in ten years of conducting tours. For God's sake, help me with 'em because I can't go on. I got to rest here a while. [She gives him a cold beer.] Thanks. Look and see if they're getting out of the bus. [She crosses to the masking foliage and separates it to look down the hill.] Are they getting out of the bus or are they staying in it, the stingy-daughters of-bitches. . . . Schoolteachers at a Baptist Female College in Blowing Rock,

Texas. Eleven, eleven of them.

MAXINE:

A football squad of old maids.

SHANNON:

Yeah, and I'm the football. Are they  
out of the bus?

MAXINE:

One's gotten out—she's going into  
the bushes.

SHANNON:

Well, I've got the ignition key to  
the bus in my pocket—this pocket—so  
they can't continue without me  
unless they walk.

MAXINE:

They're still blowin' that horn.

SHANNON:

Fantastic. I can't lose this party.  
Blake Tours has put me on probation  
because I had a bad party last month  
that tried to get me sacked and I am  
now on probation with Blake Tours.  
If I lose this party I'll be sacked  
for sure . . . Ah, my God, are they  
still all in the bus? [He heaves  
himself off the steps and staggers  
back to the path, dividing the



foliage to look down it, then  
shouts.] Hank! Get them out of the  
busssss! Bring them up heeee-re!

HANK'S VOICE [from below]:

They want a go back in tooooooowwwwn.

SHANNON:

They can't go back in toooowwwwn!—  
Whew—Five years ago this summer I  
was conducting round-the-world tours  
for Cook's. Exclusive groups of  
retired Wall Street financiers. We  
traveled in fleets of Pierce Arrows  
and Hispano Suizas.—Are they getting  
out of the bus?

MAXINE:

You're going to pieces, are you?

SHANNON:

No! Gone! Gone! [He rises and shouts  
down the hill again.] Hank! Come up  
here! Come on up here a minute! I  
wanta talk to you about this  
situation!—Incredible, fantastic . .

.

[He drops back on the steps, his  
head falling into his hands.]

MAXINE:

They're not getting out of the bus.—

Shannon . . . you're not in a nervous condition to cope with this party, Shannon, so let them go and you stay.

SHANNON:

You know my situation: I lose this job, what's next? There's nothing lower than Blake Tours, Maxine honey.—Are they getting out of the bus? Are they getting out of it now?

MAXINE:

Man's comin' up the hill.

SHANNON:

Aw. Hank. You gotta help me with him.

MAXINE:

I'll give him a rum-coco.

[Hank comes grinning onto the verandah.]

HANK:

Shannon, them ladies are not gonna come up here, so you better come on back to the bus.

SHANNON:

Fantastic.—I'm not going down to the bus and I've got the ignition key to the bus in my pocket. It's going to stay in my pocket for the next three

days.

HANK:

You can't get away with that,  
Shannon. Hell, they'll walk back to  
town if you don't give up the bus  
key.

SHANNON:

They'd drop like flies from  
sunstrokes on that road. . . .  
Fantastic, absolutely fantastic . .  
. [Panting and sweating, he drops a  
hand on Hank's shoulder.] Hank, I  
want your co-operation. Can I have  
it? Because when you're out with a  
difficult party like this, the tour  
conductor-me-and the guide-you-have  
got to stick together to control the  
situations as they come up against  
us. It's a test of strength between  
two men, in this case, and a busload  
of old wet hens! You know that,  
don't you?

HANK:

Well. . . . [He chuckles.] There's  
this kid that's crying on the back  
seat all the time, and that's what's  
rucked up the deal. Hell, I don't

know if you did or you didn't, but they all think that you did 'cause the kid keeps crying.

SHANNON:

Hank? Look! I don't care what they think. A tour conducted by T. Lawrence Shannon is in his charge, completely—where to go, when to go, every detail of it. Otherwise I resign. So go on back down there and get them out of that bus before they suffocate in it. Haul them out by force if necessary and herd them up here. Hear me? Don't give me any argument about it. Mrs. Faulk, honey? Give him a menu, give him one of your sample menus to show the ladies. She's got a Chinaman cook here, you won't believe the menu. The cook's from Shanghai, handled the kitchen at an exclusive club there. I got him here for her, and he's a bug, a fanatic about—whew!—continental cuisine . . . can even make beef Stroganoff and thermidor dishes. Mrs. Faulk, honey? Hand him one of those—whew!—one of those

fantastic sample menus. [Maxine chuckles, as if perpetrating a practical joke, as she hands him a sheet of paper.] Thanks. Now, here. Go on back down there and show them this fantastic menu. Describe the view from the hill, and . . . [Hank accepts the menu with a chuckling shake of the head.] And have a cold Carta Blanca and. . . .

HANK:

You better go down with me.

SHANNON:

I can't leave this verandah for at least forty-eight hours. What in blazes is this? A little animated cartoon by Hieronymus Bosch?

[The German family which is staying at the hotel, the Fahrenkopfs, their daughter and son-in-law, suddenly make a startling, dreamlike entrance upon the scene. They troop around the verandah, then turn down into the jungle path.

They are all dressed in the minimal concession to decency and all are pink and gold like baroque cupids in various sizes—Rubensesque, splendidly physical. The bride, Hilda, walks astride a big inflated rubber horse which has an ecstatic smile and great winking eyes. She shouts "Horsey, horsey, giddap!" as she waddles astride it, followed by her Wagnerian-tenor bridegroom, Wolfgang, and her father, Herr Fahrenkopf, a tank manufacturer from Frankfurt. He is carrying a portable short-wave radio, which is tuned in to

the crackle and guttural voices of a German broadcast reporting the Battle of Britain. Frau Fahrenkopf, bursting with rich, healthy fat and carrying a basket of food for a picnic at the beach, brings up the rear. They begin to sing a Nazi marching song.]

SHANNON:

Aw—Nazis. How come there's so many  
of them down here lately?

MAXINE:

Mexico's the front door to South  
America—and the back door to the  
States, that's why.

SHANNON:

Aw, and you're setting yourself up  
here as a receptionist at both  
doors, now that Fred's dead? [Maxine  
comes over and sits down on him in  
the hammock.] Get off my pelvis  
before you crack it. If you want to  
crack something, crack some ice for  
my forehead. [She removes a chunk of  
ice from her glass and massages his  
forehead with it.]—Ah, God. . . .

MAXINE [chuckling]:

Ha, so you took the young chick and  
the old hens are squawking about it,

Shannon?

SHANNON:

The kid asked for it, no kidding,  
but she's seventeen-less, a month  
less'n seventeen. So it's serious,  
it's very serious, because the kid  
is not just emotionally precocious,  
she's a musical prodigy, too.

MAXINE:

What's that got to do with it?

SHANNON:

Here's what it's got to do with it,  
she's traveling under the wing, the  
military escort, of this, this-butch  
vocal teacher who organizes little  
community sings in the bus. Ah, God!  
I'm surprised they're not singing  
now, they must've already  
suffocated. Or they'd be singing  
some morale-boosting number like  
"She's a Jolly Good Fellow" or "Pop  
Goes the Weasel."—Oh, God. . . .  
[Maxine chuckles up and down the  
scale.] And each night after supper,  
after the complaints about the  
supper and the check-up on the  
checks by the math instructor, and  
the vomiting of the supper by  
several ladies, who have inspected

the kitchen—then the kid, the canary, will give a vocal recital. She opens her mouth and out flies Carrie Jacobs Bond or Ethelbert Nevin. I mean after a day of one indescribable torment after another, such as three blowouts, and a leaking radiator in Tierra Caliente. . . . [He sits up slowly in the hammock as these recollections gather force.] And an evening climb up sierras, through torrents of rain, around hairpin turns over gorges and chasms measureless to man, and with a thermos-jug under the driver's seat which the Baptist College ladies think is filled with ice water but which I know is filled with iced tequila—I mean after such a day has finally come to a close, the musical prodigy, Miss Charlotte Goodall, right after supper, before there's a chance to escape, will give a heartbreaking and earsplitting rendition of Carrie Jacobs Bond's "End of a Perfect Day"—with absolutely no humor. . . .



MAXINE:

Hah!

SHANNON:

Yeah, "Hah!" Last night—no, night before last, the bus burned out its brake linings in Chilpancingo. This town has a hotel . . . this hotel has a piano, which hasn't been tuned since they shot Maximilian. This Texas songbird opens her mouth and out flies "I Love You Truly," and it flies straight at me, with gestures, all right at me, till her chaperone, this Diesel-driven vocal instructor of hers, slams the piano lid down and hauls her out of the mess hall. But as she's hauled out Miss Bird-Girl opens her mouth and out flies, "Larry, Larry, I love you, I love you truly!" That night, when I went to my room, I found that I had a roommate.

MAXINE:

The musical prodigy had moved in with you?

SHANNON:

The spook had moved in with me. In

that hot room with one bed, the width of an ironing board and about as hard, the spook was up there on it, sweating, stinking, grinning up at me.

MAXINE:

Aw, the spook. [She chuckles.] So you've got the spook with you again.

SHANNON:

That's right, he's the only passenger that got off the bus with me, honey.

MAXINE:

Is he here now?

SHANNON:

Not far.

MAXINE:

On the verandah?

SHANNON:

He might be on the other side of the verandah. Oh, he's around somewhere, but he's like the Sioux Indians in the Wild West fiction, he doesn't attack before sundown, he's an after-sundown shadow. . . .

[Shannon wriggles out of the hammock as the bus horn gives one last, long protesting blast.]

MAXINE:

I have a little shadow  
That goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him  
Is more than I can see.  
He's very, very like me,  
From his heels up to his head,  
And he always hops before me  
When I hop into my bed.

SHANNON:

That's the truth. He sure hops in  
the bed with me.

MAXINE:

When you're sleeping alone, or . . .  
?

SHANNON:

I haven't slept in three nights.

MAXINE:

Aw, you will tonight, baby.

[The bus horn sounds again. Shannon rises and squints down  
the hill at the bus.]

SHANNON:

How long's it take to sweat the  
faculty of a Baptist Female College  
out of a bus that's parked in the  
sun when it's a hundred degrees in  
the shade?

MAXINE:

They're staggering out of it now.

SHANNON:

Yeah, I've won this round, I reckon.  
What're they doing down there, can  
you see?

MAXINE:

They're crowding around your pal  
Hank.

SHANNON:

Tearing him to pieces?

MAXINE:

One of them's slapped him, he's  
ducked back into the bus, and she is  
starting up here.

SHANNON:

Oh, Great Caesar's ghost, it's the  
butch vocal teacher.

MISS FELLOWES [in a strident voice,  
from below]:

Shannon! Shannon!

SHANNON:

For God's sake, help me with her.

MAXINE:

You know I'll help you, baby, but  
why don't you lay off the young ones  
and cultivate an interest in normal

grown-up women?

MISS FELLOWES [her voice coming  
nearer]:

Shannon!

SHANNON [shouting down the hill]:

Come on up, Miss Fellowes,  
everything's fixed. [To Maxine.] Oh,  
God, here she comes chargin' up the  
hill like a bull elephant on a  
rampage!

[Miss Fellowes thrashes through the foliage at the top of  
the jungle path.]

SHANNON:

Miss Fellowes, never do that! Not at  
high noon in a tropical country in  
summer. Never charge up a hill like  
you were leading a troop of cavalry  
attacking an almost impregnable. . .

.

MISS FELLOWES [panting and  
furious]: I don't want advice or  
instructions, I want the bus key!

SHANNON:

Mrs. Faulk, this is Miss Judith  
Fellowes.

MISS FELLOWES:

Is this man making a deal with you?

MAXINE:

I don't know what you—

MISS FELLOWES:

Is this man getting a kickback out  
of you?

MAXINE:

Nobody gets any kickback out of me.

I turn away more people than—

MISS FELLOWES [cutting in]:

This isn't the Ambos Mundos. It says  
in the brochure that in Puerto  
Barrio we stay at the Ambos Mundos  
in the heart of the city.

SHANNON:

Yes, on the plaza—tell her about the  
plaza.

MAXINE:

What about the plaza?

SHANNON:

It's hot, noisy, stinking, swarming  
with flies. Pariah dogs dying in the

—

MISS FELLOWES:

How is this place better?

SHANNON:

The view from this verandah is equal  
and I think better than the view  
from Victoria Peak in Hong Kong, the

view from the roof-terrace of the  
sultan's palace in-

MISS FELLOWES [cutting in]:

I want the view of a clean bed, a  
bathroom with plumbing that works,  
and food that is eatable and  
digestible and not contaminated by  
filthy-

SHANNON:

Miss Fellowes!

MISS FELLOWES:

Take your hand off my arm.

SHANNON:

Look at this sample menu. The cook  
is a Chinese imported from Shanghai  
by me! Sent here by me, year before  
last, in nineteen thirty-eight. He  
was the chef at the Royal Colonial  
Club in-

MISS FELLOWES [cutting in]:

You got a telephone here?

MAXINE:

Sure, in the office.

MISS FELLOWES:

I want to use it-I'll call collect.

Where's the office?

MAXINE [to Pancho]:

Llevala al telefono!

[With Pancho showing her the way Miss Fellowes stalks off around the verandah to the office. Shannon falls back, sighing desperately, against the verandah wall.]

MAXINE:

Hah!

SHANNON:

Why did you have to . . . ?

MAXINE:

Huh?

SHANNON:

Come out looking like this! For you  
it's funny but for me it's. . . .

MAXINE:

This is how I look. What's wrong  
with how I look?

SHANNON:

I told you to button your shirt. Are  
you so proud of your boobs that you  
won't button your shirt up?—Go in  
the office and see if she's calling.  
Blake Tours to get me fired.

MAXINE:

She better not unless she pays for  
the call.

[She goes around the turn of the verandah.]

[Miss Hannah Jelkes appears below the verandah steps and



stops short as Shannon turns to the wall, pounding his fist against it with a sobbing sound in his throat.]

HANNAH:

Excuse me.

[Shannon looks down at her, dazed. Hannah is remarkable looking—ethereal, almost ghostly. She suggests a Gothic cathedral image of a medieval saint, but animated. She could be thirty, she could be forty: she is totally feminine and yet androgynous-looking—almost timeless. She is wearing a cotton print dress and has a bag slung on a strap over her shoulder.]

HANNAH:

Is this the Costa Verde Hotel?

SHANNON [suddenly pacified by her appearance]:

Yes. Yes, it is.

HANNAH:

Are you . . . you're not, the hotel manager, are you?

SHANNON:

No. She'll be right back.

HANNAH:

Thank you. Do you have any idea if they have two vacancies here? One for myself and one for my grandfather who's waiting in a taxi down there on the road. I didn't want to bring him up the hill—till I'd made sure they have rooms for us first.

SHANNON:

Well, there's plenty of room here  
out-of-season-like now.

HANNAH:

Good! Wonderful! I'll get him out of  
the taxi.

SHANNON:

Need any help?

HANNAH:

No, thank you. We'll make it all  
right.

[She gives him a pleasant nod and goes back off down the path through the rain forest. A coconut plops to the ground; a parrot screams at a distance. Shannon drops into the hammock and stretches out. Then Maxine reappears.]

SHANNON:

How about the call? Did she make a  
phone call?

MAXINE:

She called a judge in Texas—Blowing  
Rock, Texas. Collect.

SHANNON:

She's trying to get me fired and she  
is also trying to pin on me a rape  
charge, a charge of statutory rape.

MAXINE:

What's "statutory rape"? I've never  
known what that was.

SHANNON:

That's when a man is seduced by a girl under twenty. [She chuckles.]

It's not funny, Maxine honey.

MAXINE:

Why do you want the young ones—or think that you do?

SHANNON:

I don't want any, any—regardless of age.

MAXINE:

Then why do you take them, Shannon? [He swallows but does not answer.]—

Huh, Shannon.

SHANNON:

People need human contact, Maxine honey.

MAXINE:

What size shoe do you wear?

SHANNON:

I don't get the point of that question.

MAXINE:

These shoes are shot and if I remember correctly, you travel with only one pair. Fred's estate included one good pair of shoes and your feet look about his size.

SHANNON:

I loved ole Fred but I don't want to  
fill his shoes, honey.

[She has removed Shannon's beat-up, English-made Oxfords.]

MAXINE:

Your socks are shot. Fred's socks  
would fit you, too, Shannon. [She  
opens his collar.] Aw-aw, I see you  
got on your gold cross. That's a bad  
sign, it means you're thinkin' again  
about goin' back to the Church.

SHANNON:

This is my last tour, Maxine. I  
wrote my old bishop this morning a  
complete confession and a complete  
capitulation.

[She takes a letter from his damp shirt pocket.]

MAXINE:

If this is the letter, baby, you've  
sweated through it, so the old  
bugger couldn't read it even if you  
mailed it to him this time.

[She has started around the verandah, and goes off as Hank  
reappears up the hill-path, mopping his face. Shannon's  
relaxed position in the hammock aggravates Hank sorely.]

HANK:

Will you get your ass out of that  
hammock?

SHANNON:

No, I will not.

HANK:

Shannon, git out of that hammock!  
[He kicks at Shannon's hips in the  
hammock.]

SHANNON:

Hank, if you can't function under  
rough circumstances, you are in the  
wrong racket, man. I gave you  
instructions, the instructions were  
simple. I said get them out of the  
bus and. . . .

[Maxine comes back with a kettle of water, a towel and  
other shaving equipment.]

HANK:

Out of the hammock, Shannon! [He  
kicks Shannon again, harder.]

SHANNON [warningly]:

That's enough, Hank. A little  
familiarity goes a long way, but not  
as far as you're going. [Maxine  
starts lathering his face.] What's  
this, what are you . . . ?

MAXINE:

Haven't you ever had a shave-and haircut

by a lady barber?

HANK:

The kid has gone into hysterics.

MAXINE:

Hold still, Shannon.

SHANNON:

Hank, hysteria is a natural phenomenon, the common denominator of the female nature. It's the big female weapon, and the test of a man is his ability to cope with it, and I can't believe you can't. If I believed that you couldn't, I would not be able—

MAXINE:

Hold still!

SHANNON:

I'm holding still. [To Hank.] No, I wouldn't be able to take you out with me again. So go on back down there and—

HANK:

You want me to go back down there and tell them you're getting a shave up here in a hammock?

MAXINE:

Tell them that Reverend Larry is

going back to the Church so they can  
go back to the Female College in  
Texas.

HANK:

I want another beer.

MAXINE:

Help yourself, piggly-wiggly, the  
cooler's in my office right around  
there. [She points around the corner  
of the verandah.]

SHANNON [as HANK goes off]:

It's horrible how you got to bluff  
and keep bluffing even when  
hollering "Help!" is all  
you're up to, Maxine. You cut me!

MAXINE:

You didn't hold still.

SHANNON:

Just trim the beard a little.

MAXINE:

I know. Baby, tonight we'll go  
night-swimming, whether it storms or  
not.

SHANNON:

Ah, God. . . .

MAXINE:

The Mexican kids are wonderful  
night-swimmers. . . . Hah, when I  
found 'em they were taking the twohundred-  
foot dives off the Quebrada,  
but the Quebrada Hotel kicked 'em  
out for being overattentive to the  
lady guests there. That's how I got  
hold of them.

SHANNON:

Maxine, you're bigger than life and  
twice as unnatural, honey.

MAXINE:

No one's bigger than life-size,  
Shannon, or even ever that big,  
except maybe Fred. [She shouts  
"Fred?" and gets a faint answering  
echo from an adjoining hill.] Little  
Sir Echo is all that answers for him  
now, Shannon, but. . . . [She pats  
some bay rum on his face.] Dear old  
Fred was always a mystery to me. He  
was so patient and tolerant with me  
that it was insulting to me. A man  
and a woman have got to challenge  
each other, y'know what I mean. I  
mean I hired those diving-boys from  
the Quebrada six months before Fred



died, and did he care? Did he give a damn when I started night-swimming with them? No. He'd go nightfishing, all night, and when I got up the next day, he'd be preparing to go out fishing again, but he just caught the fish and threw them back in the sea.

[Hank returns and sits drinking his beer on the steps.]

SHANNON:

The mystery of old Fred was simple. He was just cool and decent, that's all the mystery of him. . . . Get your pair of night-swimmers to grab my ladies' luggage out of the bus before the vocal teacher gets off the phone and stops them.

MAXINE [shouting]:

Pedro! Pancho! Muchachos! Trae las maletas al anejo! Pronto! [The Mexican boys start down the path. Maxine sits in the hammock beside Shannon.] You I'll put in Fred's old room, next to me.

SHANNON:

You want me in his socks and his shoes and in his room next to you?

[He stares at her with a shocked surmise of her intentions toward him, then flops back down in the hammock with an incredulous laugh.]  
Oh no, honey. I've just been hanging on till I could get in this hammock on this verandah over the rain forest and the still-water beach, that's all that can put me through this last tour in a condition to go back to my . . . original . . . vocation.

MAXINE:

Hah, you still have some rational moments when you face the fact that churchgoers don't go to church to hear atheistical sermons.

SHANNON:

Goddamit, I never preached an atheistical sermon in a church in my life, and. . . .

[Miss Fellowes has charged out of the office and rounds the verandah to bear down on Shannon and Maxine, who jumps up out of the hammock.]

MISS FELLOWES:

I've completed my call, which I made collect to Texas.

[Maxine shrugs, going by her around the verandah. Miss Fellowes runs across the verandah.]

SHANNON [sitting up in the hammock]:

Excuse me, Miss Fellowes, for not getting out of this hammock, but I . . . Miss Fellowes? Please sit down a minute, I want to confess something to you.

MISS FELLOWES:

That ought to be int'restin'! What?

SHANNON:

Just that—well, like everyone else, at some point or other in life, my life has cracked up on me.

MISS FELLOWES:

How does that compensate us?

SHANNON:

I don't think I know what you mean by compensate, Miss Fellowes. [He props himself up and gazes at her with the gentlest bewilderment, calculated to melt a heart of stone.] I mean I've just confessed to you that I'm at the end of my rope, and you say, "How does that compensate us?" Please, Miss Fellowes. Don't make me feel that any adult human being puts personal compensation before the dreadful,

bare fact of a man at the end of his  
rope who still has to try to go on,  
to continue, as if he'd never been  
better or stronger in his whole  
existence. No, don't do that, it  
would. . . .

MISS FELLOWES:

It would what?

SHANNON:

Shake if not shatter everything left  
of my faith in essential . . . human  
. . . goodness!

MAXINE [returning, with a pair of  
socks]:

Hah!

MISS FELLOWES:

Can you sit there, I mean lie there—  
yeah, I mean lie there . . . ! and  
talk to me about—

MAXINE:

Hah!

MISS FELLOWES:

"Essential human goodness"? Why,  
just plain human decency is beyond  
your imagination, Shannon, so lie  
there, lie there and lie there,  
we're going!

SHANNON [rising from the hammock]:  
Miss Fellowes, I thought that I was  
conducting this party, not you.

MISS FELLOWES:  
You? You just now admitted you're  
incompetent, as well as. . . .

MAXINE:

Hah.

SHANNON:

Maxine, will you—

MISS FELLOWES [cutting in with  
cold, righteous fury]:  
Shannon, we girls have worked and  
slaved all year at Baptist Female  
College for this Mexican tour, and  
the tour is a cheat!

SHANNON [to himself]:

Fantastic!

MISS FELLOWES:  
Yes, cheat! You haven't stuck to the  
schedule and you haven't stuck to  
the itinerary advertised in the  
brochure which Blake Tours put out.  
Now either Blake Tours is cheating  
us or you are cheating Blake Tours,  
and I'm putting wheels in motion—I  
don't care what it costs me—I'm. . .

.

SHANNON:

Oh, Miss Fellowes, isn't it just as plain to you as it is to me that your hysterical insults, which are not at all easy for any born and bred gentleman to accept, are not . . . motivated, provoked by . . . anything as trivial as the, the . . . the motivations that you're, you're . . . ascribing them to? Now can't we talk about the real, true cause of. . . .

MISS FELLOWES:

Cause of what?

[Charlotte Goodall appears at the top of the hill.]

SHANNON:

-Cause of your rage Miss Fellowes,  
your-

MISS FELLOWES:

Charlotte! Stay down the hill in the  
bus!

CHARLOTTE:

Judy, they're-

MISS FELLOWES:

Obey me! Down!

[Charlotte retreats from view like a well-trained dog. Miss Fellowes charges back to Shannon who has gotten out of the hammock. He places a conciliatory hand on her arm.]

MISS FELLOWES:

Take your hand off my arm!

MAXINE:

Hah!

SHANNON:

Fantastic. Miss Fellowes, please! No more shouting? Please? Now I really must ask you to let this party of ladies come up here and judge the accommodations for themselves and compare them with what they saw passing through town. Miss Fellowes, there is such a thing as charm and beauty in some places, as much as there's nothing but dull, ugly imitation of highway motels in Texas and—

[Miss Fellowes charges over to the path to see if Charlotte has obeyed her. Shannon follows, still propitiatory. Maxine says "Hah," but she gives him an affectionate little pat as he goes by her. He pushes her hand away as he continues his appeal to Miss Fellowes.]

MISS FELLOWES:

I've taken a look at those rooms and they'd make a room at the "Y" look

like a suite at the Ritz.

SHANNON:

Miss Fellowes, I am employed by  
Blake Tours and so I'm not in a  
position to tell you quite frankly  
what mistakes they've made in their  
advertising brochure. They just  
don't know Mexico. I do. I know it  
as well as I know five out of all  
six continents on the-

MISS FELLOWES:

Continent! Mexico? You never even  
studied geography if you-

SHANNON:

My degree from Sewanee is Doctor of  
Divinity, but for the past ten years  
geography's been my specialty, Miss  
Fellowes, honey! Name any tourist  
agency I haven't worked for! You  
couldn't! I'm only, now, with Blake  
Tours because I-

MISS FELLOWES:

Because you what? Couldn't keep your  
hands off innocent, underage girls  
in your-

SHANNON:

Now, Miss Fellowes. . . . [He



touches her arm again.]

MISS FELLOWES:

Take your hand off my arm!

SHANNON:

For days I've known you were furious  
and unhappy, but—

MISS FELLOWES:

Oh! You think it's just me that's  
unhappy! Hauled in that stifling bus  
over the byways, off the highways,  
shook up and bumped up so you could  
get your rake-off, is that what you—

SHANNON:

What I know is, all I know is, that  
you are the leader of the  
insurrection!

MISS FELLOWES:

All of the girls in this party have  
dysentery!

SHANNON:

That you can't hold me to blame for.

MISS FELLOWES:

I do hold you to blame for it.

SHANNON:

Before we entered Mexico, at New  
Laredo, Texas, I called you ladies  
together in the depot on the Texas

side of the border and I passed out mimeographed sheets of instructions on what to eat and what not to eat, what to drink, what not to drink in the—

MISS FELLOWES:

It's not what we ate but where we ate that gave us dysentery!

SHANNON [shaking his head like a metronome]:

It is not dysentery.

MISS FELLOWES:

The result of eating in places that would be condemned by the Board of Health in—

SHANNON:

Now wait a minute—

MISS FELLOWES:

For disregarding all rules of sanitation.

SHANNON:

It is not dysentery, it is not amoebic, it's nothing at all but—

MAXINE:

Montezuma's Revenge! That's what we call it.

SHANNON:

I even passed out pills. I passed out bottles of Enteroviaform because I knew that some of you ladies would rather be victims of Montezuma's Revenge than spend cinco centavos on bottled water in stations.

MISS FELLOWES:

You sold those pills at a profit of fifty cents per bottle.

MAXINE:

Hah-hah! [She knocks off the end of a coconut with the machete, preparing a rum-coco.]

SHANNON:

Now fun is fun, Miss Fellowes, but an accusation like that—

MISS FELLOWES:

I priced them in pharmacies, because I suspected that—

SHANNON:

Miss Fellowes, I am a gentleman, and as a gentleman I can't be insulted like this. I mean I can't accept insults of that kind even from a member of a tour that I am conducting. And, Miss Fellowes, I

think you might also remember, you  
might try to remember, that you're  
speaking to an ordained minister of  
the Church.

MISS FELLOWES:

De-frocked! But still trying to pass  
himself off as a minister!

MAXINE:

How about a rum-coco? We give a  
complimentary rum-coco to all our  
guests here. [Her offer is  
apparently unheard. She shrugs and  
drinks the rum-coco herself.]

SHANNON:

-Miss Fellowes? In every party there  
is always one individual that's  
discontented, that is not satisfied  
with all I do to make the tour more  
. . . unique—to make it different  
from the ordinary, to give it a  
personal thing, the Shannon touch.

MISS FELLOWES:

The gyp touch, the touch of a  
defrocked minister.

SHANNON:

Miss Fellowes, don't, don't, don't .

. . do what . . . you're doing! [He is on the verge of hysteria, he makes some incoherent sounds, gesticulates with clenched fists, then stumbles wildly across the verandah and leans panting for breath against a post.] Don't!

Break! Human! Pride!

VOICE FROM DOWN THE HILL [a very Texan accent]:

Judy? They're taking our luggage!

MISS FELLOWES [shouting down the hill]:

Girls! Girls! Don't let those boys touch your luggage. Don't let them bring your luggage in this dump!

GIRL'S VOICE [from below]:

Judy! We can't stop them!

MAXINE:

Those kids don't understand English.

MISS FELLOWES [wild with rage]:  
Will you please tell those boys to take that luggage back down to the bus? [She calls to the party below again.] Girls! Hold onto your luggage, don't let them take it away! We're going to drive back to

A-cap-ul-co! You hear?

GIRL'S VOICE:

Judy, they want a swim, first!

MISS FELLOWES:

I'll be right back. [She rushes off,  
shouting at the Mexican boys.] You!

Boys! Muchachos! You carry that  
luggage back down!

[The voices continue, fading. Shannon moves brokenly across  
the verandah. Maxine shakes her head.]

MAXINE:

Shannon, give 'em the bus key and  
let 'em go.

SHANNON:

And me do what?

MAXINE:

Stay here.

SHANNON:

In Fred's old bedroom—yeah, in  
Fred's old bedroom.

MAXINE:

You could do worse.

SHANNON:

Could I? Well, then, I'll do worse,  
I'll . . . do worse.

MAXINE:

Aw now, baby.

SHANNON:

If I could do worse, I'll do worse.

. . . [He grips the section of railing by the verandah steps and stares with wide, lost eyes. His chest heaves like a spent runner's and he is bathed in sweat.]

MAXINE:

Give me that ignition key. I'll take it down to the driver while you bathe and rest and have a rum-coco, baby.

[Shannon simply shakes his head slightly. Harsh bird cries sound in the rain forest. Voices are heard on the path.]

HANNAH:

Nonno, you've lost your sunglasses.

NONNO:

No. Took them off. No sun.

[Hannah appears at the top of the path, pushing her grandfather, Nonno, in a wheelchair. He is a very old man but has a powerful voice for his age and always seems to be shouting something of importance. Nonno is a poet and a showman. There is a good kind of pride and he has it, carrying it like a banner wherever he goes. He is immaculately dressed—a linen suit, white as his thick poet's hair; a black string tie; and he is holding a black cane with a gold crook.]

NONNO:

Which way is the sea?

HANNAH:

Right down below the hill, Nonno.

[He turns in the wheelchair and raises a hand to shield his eyes.]  
We can't see it from here. [The old man is deaf, and she shouts to make him hear.]

NONNO:

I can feel it and smell it. [A murmur of wind sweeps through the rain forest.] It's the cradle of life. [He is shouting, too.] Life began in the sea.

MAXINE:

These two with your party?

SHANNON:

No.

MAXINE:

They look like a pair of loonies.

SHANNON:

Shut up.

[Shannon looks at Hannah and Nonno steadily, with a relief of tension almost like that of someone going under hypnosis. The old man still squints down the path, blindly, but Hannah is facing the verandah with a proud person's hope of acceptance when it is desperately needed.]

HANNAH:

How do you do.

MAXINE:

Hello.

HANNAH:



Have you ever tried pushing a  
gentleman in a wheelchair uphill  
through a rain forest?

MAXINE:

Nope, and I wouldn't even try it  
downhill.

HANNAH:

Well, now that we've made it, I  
don't regret the effort. What a view  
for a painter! [She looks about her,  
panting, digging into her shoulderbag  
for a handkerchief, aware that  
her face is flushed and sweating.]  
They told me in town that this was  
the ideal place for a painter, and  
they weren't—whew—exaggerating!

SHANNON:

You've got a scratch on your  
forehead.

HANNAH:

Oh, is that what I felt.

SHANNON:

Better put iodine on it.

HANNAH:

Yes, I'll attend to that—whew—later,  
thank you.

MAXINE:

Anything I can do for you?

HANNAH:

I'm looking for the manager of the  
hotel.

MAXINE:

Me—speaking.

HANNAH:

Oh, you're the manager, good! How do  
you do, I'm Hannah Jelkes, Mrs. . . .

.

MAXINE:

Faulk, Maxine Faulk. What can I do  
for you folks? [Her tone indicates  
no desire to do anything for them.]

HANNAH [turning quickly to her  
grandfather]:

Nonno, the manager is a lady from  
the States.

[Nonno lifts a branch of wild orchids from his lap,  
ceremonially, with the instinctive gallantry of his kind.]

NONNO: [shouting]:

Give the lady these—botanical  
curiosities!—you picked on the way  
up.

HANNAH:

I believe they're wild orchids,  
isn't that what they are?

SHANNON:

Laelia tibicina.

HANNAH:

Oh!

NONNO:

But tell her, Hannah, tell her to keep them in the icebox till after dark, they draw bees in the sun! [He rubs a sting on his chin with a rueful chuckle.]

MAXINE:

Are you all looking for rooms here?

HANNAH:

Yes, we are, but we've come without reservations.

MAXINE:

Well, honey, the Costa Verde is closed in September—except for a few special guests, so. . . .

SHANNON:

They're special guests, for God's sake.

MAXINE:

I thought you said they didn't come with your party.

HANNAH:

Please let us be special guests.

MAXINE:

Watch out!

[Nonno has started struggling out of the wheelchair. Shannon rushes over to keep him from falling. Hannah has started toward him, too, then seeing that Shannon has caught him, she turns back to Maxine.]

HANNAH:

In twenty-five years of travel this  
is the first time we've ever arrived  
at a place without advance  
reservations.

MAXINE:

Honey, that old man ought to be in a  
hospital.

HANNAH:

Oh, no, no, he just sprained his  
ankle a little in Taxco this  
morning. He just needs a good  
night's rest, he'll be on his feet  
tomorrow. His recuperative powers  
are absolutely amazing for someone  
who is ninety-seven years young.

SHANNON:

Easy, Grampa. Hang on. [He is  
supporting the old man up to the  
verandah.] Two steps. One! Two! Now  
you've made it, Grampa.

[Nonno keeps chuckling breathlessly as Shannon gets him  
onto the verandah and into a wicker rocker.]

HANNAH [breaking in quickly]:

I can't tell you how much I appreciate your taking us in here now. It's—providential.

MAXINE:

Well, I can't send that old man back down the hill right now—but like I told you the Costa Verde's practically closed in September. I just take in a few folks as a special accommodation and we operate on a special basis this month.

NONNO [cutting in abruptly and loudly]:

Hannah, tell the lady that my perambulator is temporary. I will soon be ready to crawl and then to toddle and before long I will be leaping around here like an—old—mountain—goat, ha-ha-ha-ha. . . .

HANNAH:

Yes, I explained that, Grandfather.

NONNO:

I don't like being on wheels.

HANNAH:

Yes, my grandfather feels that the decline of the Western world began

with the invention of the wheel.  
[She laughs heartily, but Maxine's  
look is unresponsive.]

NONNO:

And tell the manager . . . the, uh,  
lady . . . that I know some hotels  
don't want to take dogs, cats or  
monkeys and some don't even solicit  
the patronage of infants in thei  
r late nineties who arrive in  
perambulators with flowers instead  
of rattles . . . [He chuckles with a  
sort of fearful, slightly mad  
quality. Hannah perhaps has the  
impulse to clap a hand over his  
mouth at this moment but must stand  
there smiling and smiling and  
smiling.] . . . and a brandy flask  
instead of a teething ring, but tell  
her that these, uh, concessions to  
man's seventh age are only  
temporary, and. . . .

HANNAH:

Nonno, I told her the wheelchair's  
because of a sprained ankle, Nonno!

SHANNON [to himself]:

Fantastic.

NONNO:

And after my siesta, I'll wheel it  
back down the hill, I'll kick it  
back down the hill, right into the  
sea, and tell her. . . .

HANNAH:

Yes? What, Nonno? [She has stopped  
smiling now. Her tone and her look  
are frankly desperate.] What shall I  
tell her now, Nonno?

NONNO:

Tell her that if she'll forgive my  
disgraceful longevity and this . . .  
temporary decrepitude . . . I will  
present her with the last signed . .  
. compitty [he means "copy"] of my  
first volume of verse, published in  
. . . when, Hannah?

HANNAH [hopelessly]:

The day that President Ulysses S.  
Grant was inaugurated, Nonno.

NONNO:

Morning Trumpet! Where is it—you  
have it, give it to her right now.

HANNAH:

Later, a little later! [Then she  
turns to Maxine and Shannon.] My

grandfather is the poet Jonathan Coffin. He is ninety-seven years young and will be ninety-eight years young the fifth of next month, October.

MAXINE:

Old folks are remarkable, yep. The office phone's ringing—excuse me, I'll be right back. [She goes around the verandah.]

NONNO:

Did I talk too much?

HANNAH [quietly, to Shannon]:

I'm afraid that he did. I don't think she's going to take us.

SHANNON:

She'll take you. Don't worry about it.

HANNAH:

Nobody would take us in town, and if we don't get in here, I would have to wheel him back down through the rain forest, and then what, then where? There would just be the road, and no direction to move in, except out to sea—and I doubt that we could make it divide before us.



SHANNON:

That won't be necessary. I have a little influence with the patrona.

HANNAH:

Oh, then, do use it, please. Her eyes said no in big blue capital letters.

[Shannon pours some water from a pitcher on the verandah and hands it to the old man.]

NONNO:

What is this—libation?

SHANNON:

Some ice water, Grampa.

HANNAH:

Oh, that's kind of you. Thank you. I'd better give him a couple of salt tablets to wash down with it.

[Briskly she removes a bottle from her shoulder-bag.] Won't you have some? I see you're perspiring, too. You have to be careful not to become dehydrated in the hot seasons under the Tropic of Cancer.

SHANNON [pouring another glass of water]:

Are you a little financially

dehydrated, too?

HANNAH:

That's right. Bone dry, and I think the patrona suspects it. It's a logical assumption, since I pushed him up here myself, and the patrona has the look of a very logical woman. I am sure she knows that we couldn't afford to hire the taxi driver to help us up here.

MAXINE [calling from the back]:

Pancho?

HANNAH:

A woman's practicality when she's managing something is harder than a man's for another woman to cope with, so if you have influence with her, please do use it. Please try to convince her that my grandfather will be on his feet tomorrow, if not tonight, and with any luck whatsoever, the money situation will be solved just as quickly. Oh, here she comes back, do help us!

[Involuntarily Hannah seizes hold of Shannon's wrist as Maxine stalks back onto the verandah, still shouting for

Pancho. The Mexican boy reappears, sucking a juicy peeled mango—its juice running down his chin onto his throat.]

MAXINE:

Pancho, run down to the beach and tell Herr Fahrenkopf that the German Embassy's waiting on the phone for him. [Pancho stares at her blankly until she repeats the order in Spanish.] Dile a Herr Fahrenkopf que la embajada alemana lo llama al telefono. Corre, corre! [Pancho starts indolently down the path, still sucking noisily on the mango.] I said run! Corre, corre! [He goes into a leisurely loping pace and disappears through the foliage.]

HANNAH:

What graceful people they are!

MAXINE:

Yeah, they're graceful like cats, and just as dependable, too.

HANNAH:

Shall we, uh, . . . register now?

MAXINE:

You all can register later but I'll have to collect six dollars from you first if you want to put your names

in the pot for supper. That's how  
I've got to operate here out of  
season.

HANNAH:

Six? Dollars?

MAXINE:

Yeah, three each. In season we  
operate on the continental plan but  
out of season like this we change to  
the modified American plan.

HANNAH:

Oh, what is the, uh . . .  
modification of it? [She gives  
Shannon a quick glance of appeal as  
she stalls for time, but his  
attention has turned inward as the  
bus horn blows down the hill.]

MAXINE:

Just two meals are included instead  
of all three.

HANNAH [moving closer to Shannon  
and raising her voice]:

Breakfast and dinner?

MAXINE:

A continental breakfast and a cold  
lunch.

SHANNON [aside]:

Yeah, very cold-cracked ice—if you  
crack it yourself.

HANNAH [reflectively]:

Not dinner.

MAXINE:

No! Not dinner.

HANNAH:

Oh, I see, uh, but . . . we, uh,  
operate on a special basis  
ourselves. I'd better explain it to

MAXINE:

How do you mean "operate"—on what  
"basis"?

HANNAH:

Here's our card. I think you may  
have heard of us. [She presents the  
card to Maxine.] We've had a good  
many write-ups. My grandfather is  
the oldest living and practicing  
poet. And he gives recitations. I .  
. . . paint . . . water colors and I'm  
a "quick sketch artist." We travel  
together. We pay our way as we go by  
my grandfather's recitations and the  
sale of my water colors and quick  
character sketches in charcoal or

pastel.

SHANNON [to himself]:

I have fever.

HANNAH:

I usually pass among the tables at lunch and dinner in a hotel. I wear an artist's smock—picturesquely dabbed with paint—wide Byronic collar and flowing silk tie. I don't push myself on people. I just display my work and smile at them sweetly and if they invite me to do so sit down to make a quick character sketch in pastel or charcoal. If not? Smile sweetly and go on.

SHANNON:

What does Grandpa do?

HANNAH:

We pass among the tables together slowly. I introduce him as the world's oldest living and practicing poet. If invited, he gives a recitation of a poem. Unfortunately all of his poems were written a long time ago. But do you know, he has started a new poem? For the first

time in twenty years he's started  
another poem!

SHANNON:

Hasn't finished it yet?

HANNAH:

He still has inspiration, but his  
power of concentration has weakened  
a little, of course.

MAXINE:

Right now he's not concentrating.

SHANNON:

Grandpa's catchin' forty winks.  
Grampa? Let's hit the sack.

MAXINE:

Now wait a minute. I'm going to call  
a taxi for these folks to take them  
back to town.

HANNAH:

Please don't do that. We tried every  
hotel in town and they wouldn't take  
us. I'm afraid I have to place  
myself at your . . . mercy.

[With infinite gentleness Shannon has roused the old man  
and is leading him into one of the cubicles back of the  
verandah.

Distant cries of bathers are heard from the beach. The  
afternoon light is fading very fast now as the sun has  
dropped behind an island hilltop out to sea.]

MAXINE:

Looks like you're in for one night.

Just one.

HANNAH:

Thank you.

MAXINE:

The old man's in number 4. You take  
3. Where's your luggage—no luggage?

HANNAH:

I hid it behind some palmettos at  
the foot of the path.

SHANNON [shouting to Pancho]:

Bring up her luggage. Tu, flojo . .  
. las maletas . . . baja las palmas.  
Vamos! [The Mexican boys rush down  
the path.] Maxine honey, would you  
cash a postdated check for me?

MAXINE [shrewdly]:

Yeah—mañana, maybe.

SHANNON:

Thanks—generosity is the cornerstone  
of your nature.

[Maxine utters her one-note bark of a laugh as she marches  
around the corner of the verandah.]

HANNAH:

I'm dreadfully afraid my grandfather  
had a slight stroke in those high



passes through the sierras. [She says this with the coolness of someone saying that it may rain before nightfall. An instant later, a long, long sigh of wind sweeps the hillside. The bathers are heard shouting below.]

SHANNON:

Very old people get these little "cerebral accidents," as they call them. They're not regular strokes, they're just little cerebral . . . incidents. The symptoms clear up so quickly that sometimes the old people don't even know they've had them.

[They exchange this quiet talk without looking at each other.]

The Mexican boys crash back through the bushes at the top of the path, bearing some pieces of ancient luggage fantastically plastered with hotel and travel stickers indicating a vast range of wandering. The boys deposit the luggage near the steps.]

SHANNON:

How many times have you been around the world?

HANNAH:

Almost as many times as the world's been around the sun, and I feel as

if I had gone the whole way on foot.

SHANNON [picking up her luggage]:

What's your cell number?

HANNAH [smiling faintly]:

I believe she said it was cell  
number 3.

SHANNON:

She probably gave you the one with  
the leaky roof. [He carries the bags  
into the cubicle. Maxine is visible  
to the off screen audience only as she appears  
outside the door to her office on  
the wing of the verandah.] But you  
won't find out till it rains and  
then it'll be too late to do much  
about it but swim out of it. [Hannah  
laughs wanly. Her fatigue is now  
very plain. Shannon comes back out  
with her luggage.] Yep, she gave you  
the one with the leaky roof so you  
take mine and. . . .

HANNAH:

Oh, no, no, Mr. Shannon, I'll find a  
dry spot if it rains.

MAXINE [from around the corner of  
the verandah]:

Shannon!

[A bit of pantomime occurs between Hannah and Shannon. He wants to put her luggage in cubicle number 5. She catches hold of his arm, indicating by gesture toward the back that it is necessary to avoid displeasing the proprietor. Maxine shouts his name louder. Shannon surrenders to Hannah's pleading and puts her luggage back in the leaky cubicle number 3.]

HANNAH:

Thank you so much, Mr. Shannon. [She disappears behind the mosquito netting. Maxine advances to the verandah angle as Shannon starts toward his own cubicle.]

MAXINE [mimicking Hannah's voice]:  
"Thank you so much, Mr. Shannon."

SHANNON:

Don't be bitchy. Some people say thank you sincerely. [He goes past her and down the steps from the end of the verandah.] I'm going down for a swim now.

MAXINE:

The water's blood temperature this time of day.

SHANNON:

Yeah, well, I have a fever so it'll

seem cooler to me. [He crosses  
rapidly to the jungle path leading  
to the beach.]

MAXINE [following him]:

Wait for me, I'll. . . .

[She means she will go down with him, but he ignores her call and disappears into the foliage. Maxine shrugs angrily and goes back onto the verandah. She faces out, gripping the railing tightly and glaring into the blaze of the sun as if it were a personal enemy. Then the ocean breathes a long cooling breath up the hill, as Nonno's voice is heard from his cubicle]

NONNO:

How calmly does the orange branch  
Observe the sky begin to blanch,  
Without a cry, without a prayer,  
With no expression of despair. . .

.

[And from a beach cantina in the distance a marimba band is heard playing a popular song of that summer of 1940, "Palabras de Mujer"—which means "Words of Women."]

FADE OUT

EXT. OUTSIDE COSTA VERDE HOTEL - NEAR SUNSET SEVERAL HOURS  
LATER

FADE IN

Several hours later: near sunset.

The scene is bathed in a deep golden, almost coppery light; the heavy tropical foliage gleams with wetness from a recent rain.

Maxine comes around the turn of the verandah. To the

formalities of evening she has made the concession of changing from Levis to clean white cotton pants, and from a blue work shirt to a pink one. She is about to set up the folding cardtables for the evening meal which is served on the verandah. All the while she is talking, she is setting up tables, etc.

MAXINE:

Miss Jelkes?

[Hannah lifts the mosquito net over the door of cubicle number 3.]

HANNAH:

Yes, Mrs. Faulk?

MAXINE:

Can I speak to you while I set up these tables for supper?

HANNAH:

Of course, you may. I wanted to speak to you, too. [She comes out. She is now wearing her artist's smock.]

MAXINE:

Good.

HANNAH:

I just wanted to ask you if there's a tub-bath Grandfather could use. A shower is fine for me—I prefer a shower to a tub—but for my grandfather there is some danger of

falling down in a shower and at his age, although he says he is made out of India rubber, a broken hipbone would be a very serious matter, so

I. . . .

MAXINE:

What I wanted to say is I called up the Casa de Huéspedes about you and your Grampa, and I can get you in there.

HANNAH:

Oh, but we don't want to move!

MAXINE:

The Costa Verde isn't the right place for you. Y'see, we cater to folks that like to rough it a little, and—well, frankly, we cater to younger people.

[Hannah has started unfolding a cardtable.]

HANNAH:

Oh yes . . . uh . . . well . . . the, uh, Casa de Huéspedes, that means a, uh, sort of a rooming house, Mrs. Faulk?

MAXINE:

Boardinghouse. They feed you, they'll even feed you on credit.

HANNAH:

Where is it located?

MAXINE:

It has a central location. You could  
get a doctor there quick if the old  
man took sick on you. You got to  
think about that.

HANNAH:

Yes, I—[She nods gravely, more to  
herself than Maxine.]—I have thought  
about that, but. . . .

MAXINE:

What are you doing?

HANNAH:

Making myself useful.

MAXINE:

Don't do that. I don't accept help  
from guests here.

[Hannah hesitates, but goes on setting the tables.]

HANNAH:

Oh, please, let me. Knife and fork  
on one side, spoon on the . . . ?

[Her voice dies out.]

MAXINE:

Just put the plates on the napkins  
so they don't blow away.

HANNAH:

Yes, it is getting breezy on the verandah. [She continues setting the table.]

MAXINE:

Hurricane winds are already hitting up coast.

HANNAH:

We've been through several typhoons in the Orient. Sometimes outside disturbances like that are an almost welcome distraction from inside disturbances, aren't they? [This is said almost to herself. She finishes putting the plates on the paper napkins.] When do you want us to leave here, Mrs. Faulk?

MAXINE:

The boys'll move you in my station wagon tomorrow—no charge for the service.

HANNAH:

That is very kind of you. [Maxine starts away.] Mrs. Faulk?

MAXINE [turning back to her with obvious reluctance]:

Huh?

HANNAH:



Do you know jade?

MAXINE:

Jade?

HANNAH:

Yes.

MAXINE:

Why?

HANNAH:

I have a small but interesting collection of jade pieces. I asked if you know jade because in jade it's the craftsmanship, the carving of the jade, that's most important about it. [She has removed a jade ornament from her blouse.] This one, for instance—a miracle of carving. Tiny as it is, it has two figures carved on it—the legendary Prince Ahk and Princess Angh, and a heron flying above them. The artist that carved it probably received for this miraculously delicate workmanship, well, I would say perhaps the price of a month's supply of rice for his family, but the merchant who employed him sold it, I would guess, for at least three hundred pounds

sterling to an English lady who got  
tired of it and gave it to me,  
perhaps because I painted her not as  
she was at that time but as I could  
see she must have looked in her  
youth. Can you see the carving?

MAXINE:

Yeah, honey, but I'm not operating a  
hock shop here, I'm trying to run a  
hotel.

HANNAH:

I know, but couldn't you just accept  
it as security for a few days' stay  
here?

MAXINE:

You're completely broke, are you?

HANNAH:

Yes, we are—completely.

MAXINE:

You say that like you're proud of  
it.

HANNAH:

I'm not proud of it or ashamed of it  
either. It just happens to be what's  
happened to us, which has never  
happened before in all our travels.

MAXINE [grudgingly]:

You're telling the truth, I reckon,  
but I told you the truth, too, when  
I told you, when you came here, that  
I had just lost my husband and he'd  
left me in such a financial hole  
that if living didn't mean more to  
me than money, I'd might as well  
have been dropped in the ocean with  
him.

HANNAH:

Ocean?

MAXINE [peacefully philosophical  
about it]:

I carried out his burial  
instructions exactly. Yep, my  
husband, Fred Faulk, was the  
greatest game fisherman on the West  
Coast of Mexico—he'd racked up  
unbeatable records in sailfish,  
tarpon, kingfish, barracuda—and on  
his deathbed, last week, he  
requested to be dropped in the sea,  
yeah, right out there in that bay,  
not even sewed up in canvas, just in  
his fisherman outfit. So now old  
Freddie the Fisherman is feeding the  
fish—fishes' revenge on old Freddie.

How about that, I ask you?

HANNAH [regarding Maxine sharply]:

I doubt that he regrets it.

MAXINE:

I do. It gives me the shivers.

[She is distracted by the German party singing a marching song on the path up from the beach. Shannon appears at the top of the path, a wet beachrobe clinging to him. Maxine's whole concentration shifts abruptly to him. She freezes and blazes with it like an exposed power line. For a moment the "hot light" is concentrated on her tense, furious figure.

Hannah provides a visual counterpoint. She clenches her eyes shut for a moment, and when they open, it is on a look of stoical despair of the refuge she has unsuccessfully fought for. Then Shannon approaches the verandah and the scene is his.]

SHANNON:

Here they come up, your conquerors  
of the world, Maxine honey, singing  
"Horst Wessel." [He chuckles  
fiercely, and starts toward the  
verandah steps.]

MAXINE:

Shannon, wash that sand off you  
before you come on the verandah.

[The Germans are heard singing the "Horst Wessel" marching song. Soon they appear, trooping up from the beach like an animated canvas by Rubens. They are all nearly nude, pinked and bronzed by the sun. The women have decked themselves with garlands of pale green seaweed, glistening wet, and

the Munich-opera bridegroom is blowing on a great conch shell.

His father-in-law, the tank manufacturer, has his portable radio, which is still transmitting a short-wave broadcast about the Battle of Britain, now at its climax.]

HILDA [capering, astride her rubber horse]:

Horsey, horsey, horsey!

HERR FAHRENKOPF [ecstatically]:

London is burning, the heart of London's on fire! [Wolfgang turns a handspring onto the verandah and walks on his hands a few paces, then tumbles over with a great whoop. Maxine laughs delightedly with the Germans.] Beer, beer, beer!

FRAU FAHRENKOPF:

Tonight champagne!

[The euphoric horseplay and shouting continue as they gambol around the turn of the verandah. Shannon has come onto the porch. Maxine's laughter dies out a little sadly, with envy.]

SHANNON:

You're turning this place into the Mexican Berchtesgaden, Maxine honey?

MAXINE:

I told you to wash that sand off.  
[Shouts for beer from the Germans draw her around the verandah

corner.]

HANNAH:

Mr. Shannon, do you happen to know the Casa de Huéspedes, or anything about it, I mean? [Shannon stares at her somewhat blankly.] We are, uh, thinking of . . . moving there tomorrow. Do you, uh, recommend it?

SHANNON:

I recommend it along with the Black Hole of Calcutta and the Siberian salt mines.

HANNAH [nodding reflectively]:

I suspected as much. Mr. Shannon, in your touring party, do you think there might be anyone interested in my water colors? Or in my character sketches?

SHANNON:

I doubt it. I doubt that they're corny enough to please my ladies. Oh-oh! Great Caesar's ghost. . . . [This exclamation is prompted by the shrill, approaching call of his name. Charlotte appears from the rear, coming from the hotel annex, and rushes like a teen-age Medea

toward the verandah. Shannon ducks into his cubicle, slamming the door so quickly that a corner of the mosquito netting is caught and sticks out, flirtatiously. Charlotte rushes onto the verandah.]

CHARLOTTE:

Larry!

HANNAH:

Are you looking for someone, dear?

CHARLOTTE:

Yeah, the man conducting our tour,  
Larry Shannon.

HANNAH:

Oh, Mr. Shannon. I think he went  
down to the beach.

CHARLOTTE:

I just now saw him coming up from  
the beach. [She is tense and  
trembling, and her eyes keep darting  
up and down the verandah.]

HANNAH:

Oh. Well. . . . But. . . .

CHARLOTTE:

Larry? Larry! [Her shouts startle  
the rain-forest birds into a  
clamorous moment.]

HANNAH:

Would you like to leave a message  
for him, dear?

CHARLOTTE:

No. I'm staying right here till he  
comes out of wherever he's hiding.

HANNAH:

Why don't you just sit down, dear.  
I'm an artist, a painter. I was just  
sorting out my water colors and  
sketches in this portfolio, and look  
what I've come across. [She selects  
a sketch and holds it up.]

SHANNON [from inside his cubicle]:

Oh, God!

CHARLOTTE [darting to the cubicle]:

Larry, let me in there!

[She beats on the door of the cubicle as Herr Fahrenkopf comes around the verandah with his portable radio. He is bug-eyed with excitement over the news broadcast in German.]

HANNAH:

Guten abend.

[Herr Fahrenkopf jerks his head with a toothy grin, raising a hand for silence. Hannah nods agreeably and approaches him with her portfolio of drawings. He maintains the grin as she displays one picture after another. Hannah is uncertain whether the grin is for the pictures or the news broadcast.]

He stares at the pictures, jerking his head from time to time. It is rather like the pantomime of showing lantern slides.]



CHARLOTTE [suddenly crying out  
again]: Larry, open this door and  
let me in! I know you're in there,

Larry!

HERR FAHRENKOPF:

Silence, please, for one moment!

This is a recording of Der Führer  
addressing the Reichstag just . . .

[He glances at his wrist watch.] . . .

eight hours ago, today,

transmitted by Deutsches

Nachrichtenbüro to Mexico City.

Please! Quiet, bitte!

[A human voice like a mad dog's bark emerges from the  
static momentarily. Charlotte goes on pounding on Shannon's  
door.]

Hannah suggests in pantomime that they go to the back  
verandah, but Herr Fahrenkopf despairs of hearing the  
broadcast. As he rises to leave, the light catches his  
polished glasses so that he appears for a moment to have  
electric light bulbs in his forehead. Then he ducks his  
head in a genial little bow and goes out beyond the  
verandah, where he performs some muscle-flexing movements  
of a formalized nature, like the preliminary stances of  
Japanese Sumo wrestlers.]

HANNAH:

May I show you my work on the other  
verandah?

[Hannah had started to follow Herr Fahrenkopf with her  
portfolio, but the sketches fall out, and she stops to  
gather them from the floor with the sad, preoccupied air of  
a lonely child picking flowers.]

[Shannon's head slowly, furtively, appears through the window of his cubicle. He draws quickly back as Charlotte darts that way, stepping on Hannah's spilt sketches. Hannah utters a soft cry of protest, which is drowned by Charlotte's renewed clamor.]

CHARLOTTE:

Larry, Larry, Judy's looking for me.

Let me come in, Larry, before she  
finds me here!

SHANNON:

You can't come in. Stop shouting and  
I'll come out.

CHARLOTTE:

All right, come out

SHANNON:

Stand back from the door so I can.

[She moves a little aside and he emerges from his cubicle like a man entering a place of execution. He leans against the wall, mopping the sweat off his face with a handkerchief.]

SHANNON:

How does Miss Fellowes know what  
happened that night? Did you tell  
her?

CHARLOTTE:

I didn't tell her, she guessed.

SHANNON:

Guessing isn't knowing. If she is  
just guessing, that means she

doesn't know—I mean if you're not  
lying, if you didn't tell her.  
[Hannah has finished picking up her drawings and moves  
quietly over to the far side of the verandah.]

CHARLOTTE:

Don't talk to me like that.

SHANNON:

Don't complicate my life now,  
please, for God's sake, don't  
complicate my life now.

CHARLOTTE:

Why have you changed like this?

SHANNON:

I have a fever. Don't complicate my  
. . . fever.

CHARLOTTE:

You act like you hated me now.

SHANNON:

You're going to get me kicked out of  
Blake Tours, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE:

Judy is, not me.

SHANNON:

Why did you sing "I Love You Truly"  
at me?

CHARLOTTE:

Because I do love you truly!

SHANNON:

Honey girl, don't you know that  
nothing worse could happen to a girl  
in your, your . . . unstable  
condition . . . than to get  
emotionally mixed up with a man in  
my unstable condition, huh?

CHARLOTTE:

No, no, no, I—

SHANNON [cutting through]:

Two unstable conditions can set a  
whole world on fire, can blow it up,  
past repair, and that is just as  
true between two people as it's true  
between. . . .

CHARLOTTE:

All I know is you've got to marry  
me, Larry, after what happened  
between us in Mexico City!

SHANNON:

A man in my condition can't marry,  
it isn't decent or legal. He's lucky  
if he can even hold onto his job.  
[He keeps catching hold of her hands  
and plucking them off his  
shoulders.] I'm almost out of my  
mind, can't you see that, honey?

CHARLOTTE:

I don't believe you don't love me.

SHANNON:

Honey, it's almost impossible for anybody to believe they're not loved by someone they believe they love, but, honey, I love nobody. I'm like that, it isn't my fault. When I brought you home that night I told you good night in the hall, just kissed you on the cheek like the little girl that you are, but the instant I opened my door, you rushed into my room and I couldn't get you out of it, not even when I, oh God, tried to scare you out of it by, oh God, don't you remember?

[Miss Fellowes' voice is heard from back of the hotel calling, "Charlotte!"]

CHARLOTTE:

Yes, I remember that after making love to me, you hit me, Larry, you struck me in the face, and you twisted my arm to make me kneel on the floor and pray with you for forgiveness.

SHANNON:

I do that, I do that always when I,  
when . . . I don't have a dime left  
in my nervous emotional bank account  
-I can't write a check on it, now.

CHARLOTTE:

Larry, let me help you!

MISS FELLOWES [approaching]:

Charlotte, Charlotte, Charlie!

CHARLOTTE:

Help me and let me help you!

SHANNON:

The helpless can't help the  
helpless!

CHARLOTTE:

Let me in, Judy's coming!

SHANNON:

Let me go. Go away!

[He thrusts her violently back and rushes into his cubicle, slamming and bolting the door—though the gauze netting is left sticking out. As Miss Fellowes charges onto the verandah, Charlotte runs into the next cubicle, and Hannah moves over from where she has been watching and meets her in the center.]

MISS FELLOWES:

Shannon, Shannon! Where are you?

HANNAH:

I think Mr. Shannon has gone down to  
the beach.

MISS FELLOWES:

Was Charlotte Goodall with him? A young blonde girl in our party—was she with him?

HANNAH:

No, nobody was with him, he was completely alone.

MISS FELLOWES:

I heard a door slam.

HANNAH:

That was mine.

MISS FELLOWES [pointing to the door with the gauze sticking out]:

Is this yours?

HANNAH:

Yes, mine. I rushed out to catch the sunset.

[At this moment Miss Fellowes hears Charlotte sobbing in Hannah's cubicle. She throws the door open.]

MISS FELLOWES:

Charlotte! Come out of there, Charlie! [She has seized Charlotte by the wrist.] What's your word worth—nothing? You promised you'd stay away from him! [Charlotte frees her arm, sobbing bitterly. Miss Fellowes seizes her again, tighter,

and starts dragging her away.] I  
have talked to your father about  
this man by long distance and he's  
getting out a warrant for his  
arrest, if he dare try coming back  
to the States after this!

CHARLOTTE:

I don't care.

MISS FELLOWES:

I do! I'm responsible for you.

CHARLOTTE:

I don't want to go back to Texas!

MISS FELLOWES:

Yes, you do! And you will!

[She takes Charlotte firmly by the arm and drags her away  
behind the hotel. Hannah comes out of her cubicle, where  
she had gone when Miss Fellowes pulled Charlotte out of  
it.]

SHANNON [from his cubicle]:

Ah, God. . . .

[Hannah crosses to his cubicle and knocks by the door.]

HANNAH:

The coast is clear now, Mr. Shannon.

[Shannon does not answer or appear. She sets down her  
portfolio to pick up Nonno's white linen suit, which she  
had pressed and hung on the verandah. She crosses to his  
cubicle with it, and calls in.]

HANNAH:

Nonno? It's almost time for supper!

There's going to be a lovely, stormy



sunset in a few minutes.

NONNO [from within]:

Coming!

HANNAH:

So is Christmas, Nonno.

NONNO:

So is the Fourth of July!

HANNAH:

We're past the Fourth of July.

Hallowe'en comes next and then

Thanksgiving. I hope you'll come  
forth sooner. [She lifts the gauze  
net over his cubicle door.] Here's  
your suit, I've pressed it. [She

enters the cubicle.]

NONNO:

It's mighty dark in here, Hannah.

HANNAH:

I'll turn the light on for you.

[Shannon comes out of his cubicle, like the survivor of a plane crash, bringing out with him several pieces of his clerical garb. The black heavy silk bib is loosely fastened about his panting, sweating chest. He hangs over it a heavy gold cross with an amethyst center and attempts to fasten on a starched round collar. Now Hannah comes back out of Nonno's cubicle, adjusting the flowing silk tie which goes with her "artist" costume. For a moment they both face front, adjusting their two outfits. They are like two actors in a play which is about to fold on the road, preparing gravely for a performance which may be the last one.]

HANNAH [glancing at Shannon]:

Are you planning to conduct church services of some kind here tonight,

Mr. Shannon?

SHANNON:

Goddamit, please help me with this!

[He means the round collar.]

HANNAH: [crossing behind him]:

If you're not going to conduct a church service, why get into that uncomfortable outfit?

SHANNON:

Because I've been accused of being defrocked and of lying about it, that's why. I want to show the ladies that I'm still a clocked-frocked!-minister of the. . . .

HANNAH:

Isn't that lovely gold cross enough to convince the ladies?

SHANNON:

No, they know I redeemed it from a Mexico City pawnshop, and they suspect that that's where I got it in the first place.

HANNAH:

Hold still just a minute. [She is behind him, trying to fasten the

collar.] There now, let's hope it stays on. The buttonhole is so frayed I'm afraid that it won't hold the button. [Her fear is instantly confirmed: the button pops out.]

SHANNON:

Where'd it go?

HANNAH:

Here, right under. . . .

[She picks it up. Shannon rips the collar off, crumples it and hurls it off the verandah. Then he falls into the hammock, panting and twisting. Hannah quietly opens her sketch pad and begins to sketch him. He doesn't at first notice what she is doing.]

HANNAH [as she sketches]:

How long have you been inactive in the, uh, Church, Mr. Shannon?

SHANNON:

What's that got to do with the price of rice in China?

HANNAH [gently]:

Nothing.

SHANNON:

What's it got to do with the price of coffee beans in Brazil?

HANNAH:

I retract the question. With

apologies.

SHANNON:

To answer your question politely, I have been inactive in the Church for all but one year since I was ordained a minister of the Church.

HANNAH [sketching rapidly and moving forward a bit to see his face better]:

Well, that's quite a sabbatical, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

Yeah, that's . . . quite a . . . sabbatical.

[Nonno's voice is heard from his cubicle repeating a line of poetry several times.]

SHANNON:

Is your grandfather talking to himself in there?

HANNAH:

No, he composes out loud. He has to commit his lines to memory because he can't see to write them or read them.

SHANNON:

Sounds like he's stuck on one line.

HANNAH:

Yes. I'm afraid his memory is

failing. Memory failure is his  
greatest dread. [She says this  
almost coolly, as if it didn't  
matter.]

SHANNON:

Are you drawing me?

HANNAH:

Trying to. You're a very difficult  
subject. When the Mexican painter  
Siqueiros did his portrait of the  
American poet Hart Crane he had to  
paint him with closed eyes because  
he couldn't paint his eyes open—  
there was too much suffering in them  
and he couldn't paint it.

SHANNON:

Sorry, but I'm not going to close my  
eyes for you. I'm hypnotizing myself  
—at least trying to—by looking at  
the light on the orange tree . . .  
leaves.

HANNAH:

That's all right. I can paint your  
eyes open.

SHANNON:

I had one parish one year and then I  
wasn't defrocked but I was . . .

locked out of my church.

HANNAH:

Oh . . . Why did they lock you out  
of it?

SHANNON:

Fornication and heresy . .  
. in the same week.

HANNAH [sketching rapidly]:

What were the circumstances of the .  
. . uh . . . first offense?

SHANNON:

Yeah, the fornication came first,  
preceded the heresy by several days.  
A very young Sunday-school teacher  
asked to see me privately in my  
study. A pretty little thing—no  
chance in the world—only child, and  
both of her parents were spinsters,  
almost identical spinsters wearing  
clothes of the opposite sexes.  
Fooling some of the people some of  
the time but not me—none of the  
time. . . . [He is pacing the  
verandah with gathering agitation,  
and the all-inclusive mockery that  
his guilt produces.] Well, she  
declared herself to me—wildly.

HANNAH:

A declaration of love?

SHANNON:

Don't make fun of me, honey!

HANNAH:

I wasn't.

SHANNON:

The natural, or unnatural,  
attraction of one . . . lunatic for  
. . . another . . . that's all it  
was. I was the god-damnedest prig in  
those days that even you could  
imagine. I said, let's kneel down  
together and pray and we did, we  
knelt down, but all of a sudden the  
kneeling position turned to a  
reclining position on the rug of my  
study and . . . When we got up? I  
struck her. Yes, I did, I struck her  
in the face and called her a damned  
little tramp. So she ran home. I  
heard the next day she'd cut herself  
with her father's straightblade  
razor. Yeah, the paternal spinster  
shaved.

HANNAH:

Fatally?

SHANNON:

Just broke the skin surface enough  
to bleed a little, but it made a  
scandal.

HANNAH:

Yes, I can imagine that it . . .  
provoked some comment.

SHANNON:

That it did, it did that. [He pauses  
a moment in his fierce pacing as if  
the recollection still appalled  
him.] So the next Sunday when I  
climbed into the pulpit and looked  
down over all of those smug,  
disapproving, accusing faces  
uplifted, I had an impulse to shake  
them—so I shook them. I had a  
prepared sermon—mEEK, apologetic—I  
threw it away, tossed it into the  
chancel. Look here, I said, I  
shouted, I'm tired of conducting  
services in praise and worship of a  
senile delinquent—yeah, that's what  
I said, I shouted! All your Western  
theologies, the whole mythology of  
them, are based on the concept of  
God as a senile delinquent and, by



God, I will not and cannot continue  
to conduct services in praise and  
worship of this, this . . . this. .

. . .

HANNAH [quietly]:  
Senile delinquent?

SHANNON:  
Yeah, this angry, petulant old man.  
I mean he's represented like a badtempered  
childish old, old, sick,  
peevish man—I mean like the sort of  
old man in a nursing home that's  
putting together a jigsaw puzzle and  
can't put it together and gets  
furious at it and kicks over the  
table. Yes, I tell you they do that,  
all our theologies do it—accuse God  
of being a cruel, senile delinquent,  
blaming the world and brutally  
punishing all he created for his own  
faults in construction, and then,  
ha-ha, yeah—a thunderstorm broke  
that Sunday. . . .

HANNAH:  
You mean outside the church?

SHANNON:  
Yep, it was wilder than I was! And

out they slithered, they slithered  
out of their pews to their shiny  
black cockroach sedans, ha-ha, and I  
shouted after them, hell, I even  
followed them halfway out of the  
church, shouting after them as they.

. . . [He stops with a gasp for  
breath.]

HANNAH:

Slithered out?

SHANNON:

I shouted after them, go on, go home  
and close your house windows, all  
your windows and doors, against the  
truth about God!

HANNAH:

Oh, my heavens. Which is just what  
they did—poor things.

SHANNON:

Miss Jelkes honey, Pleasant Valley,  
Virginia, was an exclusive suburb of  
a large city and these poor things  
were not poor—materially speaking.

HANNAH [smiling a bit]:

What was the, uh, upshot of it?

SHANNON:

Upshot of it? Well, I wasn't

defrocked. I was just locked out of  
the church in Pleasant Valley,  
Virginia, and put in a nice little  
private asylum to recuperate from a  
complete nervous breakdown as they  
preferred to regard it, and then,  
and then I . . . I entered my  
present line-tours of God's world  
conducted by a minister of God with  
a cross and a round collar to prove  
it. Collecting evidence!

HANNAH:

Evidence of what, Mr. Shannon?

SHANNON [a touch shyly now]:

My personal idea of God, not as a  
senile delinquent, but as a . . . .

HANNAH:

Incomplete sentence.

SHANNON:

It's going to storm tonight—a  
terrific electric storm. Then you  
will see the Reverend T. Lawrence  
Shannon's conception of God Almighty  
paying a visit to the world he  
created. I want to go back to the  
Church and preach the gospel of God  
as Lightning and Thunder . . . and

also stray dogs vivisected and . . .  
and . . . and. . . . [He points out  
suddenly toward the sea.] That's  
him! There he is now! [He is  
pointing out at a blaze, a majestic  
apocalypse of gold light, shafting  
the sky as the sun drops into the  
Pacific.] His oblivious majesty—and  
here I am on this . . . dilapidated  
verandah of a cheap hotel, out of  
season, in a country caught and  
destroyed in its flesh and corrupted  
in its spirit by its gold-hungry  
conquistadors that bore the flag of  
the Inquisition along with the Cross  
of Christ. Yes . . . and. . . .

[There is a pause.]

HANNAH:

Mr. Shannon . . . ?

SHANNON:

Yes . . . ?

HANNAH [smiling a little]:

I have a strong feeling you will go  
back to the Church with this  
evidence you've been collecting, but  
when you do and it's a black Sunday  
morning, look out over the

congregation, over the smug,  
complacent faces for a few old, very  
old faces, looking up at you, as you  
begin your sermon, with eyes like a  
piercing cry for something to still  
look up to, something to still  
believe in. And then I think you'll  
not shout what you say you shouted  
that black Sunday in Pleasant  
Valley, Virginia. I think you will  
throw away the violent, furious  
sermon, you'll toss it into the  
chancel, and talk about . . . no,  
maybe talk about . . . nothing . . .  
just. . . .

SHANNON:

What?

HANNAH:

Lead them beside still waters  
because you know how badly they need  
the still waters, Mr. Shannon.

[There is a moment of silence between them.]

SHANNON:

Lemme see that thing. [He seizes the  
sketch pad from her and is visibly  
impressed by what he sees. There is  
another moment which is prolonged to

Hannah's embarrassment.]

HANNAH:

Where did you say the patrona put  
your party of ladies?

SHANNON:

She had her . . . Mexican concubines  
put their luggage in the annex.

HANNAH:

Where is the annex?

SHANNON:

Right down the hill back of here,  
but all of my ladies except the  
teen-age Medea and the older Medea  
have gone out in a glass-bottomed  
boat to observe the . . . submarine  
marvels.

HANNAH:

Well, when they come back to the  
annex they're going to observe my  
water colors with some marvelous  
submarine prices marked on the  
mattings.

SHANNON:

By God, you're a hustler, aren't  
you, you're a fantastic cool  
hustler.

HANNAH:

Yes, like you, Mr. Shannon. [She gently removes her sketch pad from his grasp.] Oh, Mr. Shannon, if Nonno, Grandfather, comes out of his cell number 4 before I get back, will you please look out for him for me? I won't be longer than three shakes of a lively sheep's tail. [She snatches up her portfolio and goes briskly off the verandah.]

SHANNON:

Fantastic, absolutely fantastic.

[There is a windy sound in the rain forest and a flicker of gold light like a silent scattering of gold coins on the verandah; then the sound of shouting voices. The Mexican boys appear with a wildly agitated creature—a captive iguana tied up in a shirt. They crouch down by the cactus clumps that are growing below the verandah and hitch the iguana to a post with a piece of rope. Maxine is attracted by the commotion and appears on the verandah above them.]

PEDRO:

Tenemos fiesta!\*

PANCHO:

Comeremos bien.

PEDRO:

Damela, damela! Yo la ataré.

PANCHO:

Yo la cojí—yo la ataré!

PEDRO:

Lo que vas a hacer es dejarla

escapar.

MAXINE:

Ammarla fuerte! Ole, ole! No la  
dejes escapar. Dejela moverse! [To  
Shannon.] They caught an iguana.

SHANNON:

I've noticed they did that, Maxine.

[She is holding her drink deliberately close to him. The  
Germans have heard the commotion and crowd onto the  
verandah.

Frau Fahrenkopf rushes over to Maxine.]

FRAU FAHRENKOPF:

What is this? What's going on? A  
snake? Did they catch a snake?

MAXINE:

No. Lizard.

FRAU FAHRENKOPF [with exaggerated  
revulsion]:

Ouuu . . . lizard! [She strikes a  
grotesque attitude of terror as if  
she were threatened by Jack the  
Ripper.]

SHANNON [to Maxine]:

You like iguana meat, don't you?

FRAU FAHRENKOPF:

Eat? Eat? A big lizard?

MAXINE:

Yep, they're mighty good eating—



taste like white meat of chicken.

[Frau Fahrenkopf rushes back to her family. They talk excitedly in German about the iguana.]

SHANNON:

If you mean Mexican chicken, that's  
no recommendation. Mexican chickens  
are scavengers and they taste like  
what they scavenge.

MAXINE:

Naw, I mean Texas chicken.

SHANNON [dreamily]:

Texas . . . chicken. . . .

[He paces restlessly down the verandah. Maxine divides her attention between his tall, lean figure, that seems incapable of stillness, and the wriggling bodies of the Mexican boys lying on their stomachs half under the verandah—as if she were mentally comparing two opposite attractions to her simple, sensual nature. Shannon turns at the end of the verandah and sees her eyes fixed on him.]

SHANNON:

What is the sex of this iguana,  
Maxine?

MAXINE:

Hah, who cares about the sex of an  
iguana . . . [He passes close by  
her.] . . . except another . . .  
iguana?

SHANNON:

Haven't you heard the limerick about  
iguanas? [He removes her drink from

her hand and it seems as if he might  
drink it, but he only sniffs it,  
with an expression of repugnance.

She chuckles.] There was a young gaucho named  
Bruno Who said about love, This I do  
know: Women are fine, and sheep are  
divine, But iguanas are—Numero Uno!

[On "Numero Uno" Shannon empties Maxine's drink over the  
railing, deliberately onto the humped, wriggling posterior  
of Pedro, who springs up with angry protests.]

PEDRO:

Me cágo . . . hijo de la . . .

SHANNON:

Qué? Qué?

MAXINE:

Véte!

[Shannon laughs viciously. The iguana escapes and both boys  
rush shouting after it. One of them dives on it and  
recaptures it at the edge of the jungle.]

PANCHO:

La iguana se escapé.\*

MAXINE:

Cojela, cojela! La cojiste? Si no la  
cojes, te morderá el culo. La  
cojiste?

PEDRO:

La cojí.

[The boys wiggle back under the verandah with the iguana.]

MAXINE [returning to Shannon]:

I thought you were gonna break down  
and take a drink, Reverend.

SHANNON:

Just the odor of liquor makes me  
feel nauseated.

MAXINE:

You couldn't smell it if you got it  
in you. [She touches his sweating  
forehead. He brushes her hand off  
like an insect.] Hah! [She crosses  
over to the liquor cart, and he  
looks after her with a sadistic  
grin.]

SHANNON:

Maxine honey, whoever told you that  
you look good in tight pants was not  
a sincere friend of yours.

[He turns away. At the same instant, a crash and a hoarse,  
started outcry are heard from Nonno's cubicle.]

MAXINE:

I knew it, I knew it! The old man's  
took a fall!

[Shannon rushes into the cubicle, followed by Maxine.]

[The light has been gradually, steadily dimming during the  
incident of the iguana's escape. There is, in effect, a  
division of scenes here, though it is accomplished without  
a blackout or curtain. As Shannon and Maxine enter Nonno's

cubicle, Herr Fahrenkopf appears on the now twilit verandah.

He turns on an outsize light fixture that is suspended from overhead, a full pearly-moon of a light globe that gives an unearthly luster to the scene. The great pearly globe is decorated by night insects, large but gossamer moths that have immolated themselves on its surface: the light through their wings gives them an opalescent color, a touch of fantasy.

[Now Shannon leads the old poet out of his cubicle, onto the facing verandah. The old man is impeccably dressed in snowwhite linen with a black string tie. His leonine mane of hair gleams like silver as he passes under the globe.]

NONNO:

No bones broke, I'm made out of  
India rubber!

SHANNON:

A traveler-born falls down many  
times in his travels.

NONNO:

Hannah? [His vision and other senses  
have so far deteriorated that he  
thinks he is being led out by  
Hannah.] I'm pretty sure I'm going  
to finish it here.

SHANNON [shouting, gently]:

I've got the same feeling, Grampa.

[Maxine follows them out of the cubicle.]

NONNO:

I've never been surer of anything in  
my life.

SHANNON [gently and wryly]:

I've never been surer of anything in  
mine either.

[Herr Fahrenkopf has been listening with an expression of entrancement to his portable radio, held close to his ear, the sound unrealistically low. Now he turns it off and makes an excited speech.]

HERR FAHRENKOPF:

The London fires have spread all the  
way from the heart of London to the  
Channel coast! Goering, Field  
Marshall Goering, calls it "the new  
phase of conquest!" Super-firebombs!  
Each night!

[Nonno catches only the excited tone of this announcement and interprets it as a request for a recitation. He strikes the floor with his cane, throws back his silver-maned head and begins the delivery in a grand, declamatory style.]

NONNO:

Youth must be want on, youth must  
be quick,  
Dance to the candle while lasteth  
the wick,  
Youth must be foolish and. . . .

[Nonno falters on the line, a look of confusion and fear on his face. The Germans are amused. Wolfgang goes up to Nonno and shouts into his face.]

WOLFGANG:

Sir? What is your age? How old?

[Hannah, who has just returned to the verandah, rushes up to her grandfather and answers for him.]

HANNAH:

He is ninety-seven years young!

HERR FAHRENKOPF:

How old?

HANNAH:

Ninety-seven—almost a century young!

[Herr Fahrenkopf repeats this information to his beaming wife and Hilda in German.]

NONNO [cutting in on the Germans]:

Youth must be foolish and mirthful

and blind,

Gaze not before and glance not

behind,

Mark not. . . .

[He falters again.]

HANNAH [prompting him, holding

tightly onto his arm]:

Mark not the shadow that darkens

the way—

[They recite the next lines

together.]

Regret not the glitter of any lost

day,

But laugh with no reason except the

red wine,

For youth must be youthful and

foolish and blind!

[The Germans are loudly amused. Wolfgang applauds directly in the old poet's face. Nonno makes a little unsteady bow, leaning forward precariously on his cane. Shannon takes a firm hold of his arm as Hannah turns to the Germans, opening her portfolio of sketches and addressing Wolfgang.]

HANNAH:

Am I right in thinking you are on  
your honeymoon? [There is no  
response, and she repeats the  
question in German while Frau  
Fahrenkopf laughs and nods  
vehemently.] Habe ich recht dass Sie  
auf Ihrer Hochzeitsreise sind? Was  
für eine hübsche junge Braut! Ich  
mache Pastell-Skizzen . . . darf  
ich, würden Sie mir erlauben . . . ?  
Würden Sie, bitte . . . bitte . . .

[Herr Fahrenkopf bursts into a Nazi marching song and leads his party to the champagne bucket on the table at the left. Shannon has steered Nonno to the other table.]

NONNO [exhilarated]:

Hannah! What was the take?

HANNAH [embarrassed]:

Grandfather, sit down, please stop  
shouting!

NONNO:

Hah? Did they cross your palm with  
silver or paper, Hannah?

HANNAH [almost desperately]:  
Nonno! No more shouting! Sit down at  
the table. It's time to eat!

SHANNON:

Chow time, Grampa.

NONNO [confused but still  
shouting]:

How much did they come across with?

HANNAH:

Nonno! Please!

NONNO:

Did they, did you . . . sell 'em a .  
. . water color?

HANNAH:

No sale, Grandfather!

MAXINE:

Hah!

[Hannah turns to Shannon, her usual composure shattered, or  
nearly so.]

HANNAH:

He won't sit down or stop shouting.

NONNO [blinking and beaming with  
the grotesque suggestion of an old  
coquette]:

Hah? How rich did we strike it,

Hannah?



SHANNON:

You sit down, Miss Jelkes. [He says it with gentle authority, to which she yields. He takes hold of the old man's forearm and places in his hand a crumpled Mexican bill.] Sir? Sir? [He is shouting.] Five! Dollars! I'm putting it in your pocket.

HANNAH:

We can't accept . . . gratuities,  
Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

Hell, I gave him five pesos.

NONNO:

Mighty good for one poem!

SHANNON:

Sir? Sir? The pecuniary rewards of a poem are grossly inferior to its merits, always!

[He is being fiercely, almost mockingly tender with the old man—a thing we are when the pathos of the old, the ancient, the dying is such a wound to our own (savagely beleaguered) nerves and sensibilities that this outside demand on us is beyond our collateral, our emotional reserve. This is as true of Hannah as it is of Shannon, of course. They have both overdrawn their reserves at this point of the encounter between them.]

NONNO:

Hah? Yes. . . . [He is worn out now,  
but still shouting.] We're going to  
clean up in this place!

SHANNON:

You bet you're going to clean up  
here!

[Maxine utters her one-note bark of a laugh. Shannon throws  
a hard roll at her. She wanders amiably back toward the  
German table.]

NONNO [tottering, panting, hanging  
onto Shannon's arm, thinking it is  
Hannah's]:

Is the, the . . . dining room . . .  
crowded? [He looks blindly about  
with wild surmise.]

SHANNON:

Yep, it's filled to capacity!  
There's a big crowd at the door!  
[His voice doesn't penetrate the old  
man's deafness.]

NONNO:

If there's a cocktail lounge,  
Hannah, we ought to . . . work that  
. . . first. Strike while the iron  
is hot, ho, ho, while it's hot. . .  
. [This is like a delirium—only as  
strong a woman as Hannah could  
remain outwardly impassive.]

HANNAH:

He thinks you're me, Mr. Shannon.  
Help him into a chair. Please stay  
with him a minute, I. . .

[She moves away from the table and breathes as if she has just been dragged up half-drowned from the sea. Shannon eases the old man into a chair. Almost at once Nonno's feverish vitality collapses and he starts drifting back toward half sleep.]

SHANNON [crossing to HANNAH]:

What're you breathing like that for?

HANNAH:

Some people take a drink, some take  
a pill. I just take a few deep  
breaths.

SHANNON:

You're making too much out of this.  
It's a natural thing in a man as old  
as Grampa.

HANNAH:

I know, I know. He's had more than  
one of these little "cerebral  
accidents" as you call them, and all  
in the last few months. He was  
amazing till lately. I had to show  
his passport to prove that he was  
the oldest living and practicing  
poet on earth. We did well, we made  
expenses and more! But . . . when I

saw he was failing, I tried to persuade him to go back to Nantucket, but he conducts our tours. He said, "No, Mexico!" So here we are on this windy hilltop like a pair of scarecrows. . . . The bus from Mexico City broke down at an altitude of 15,000 feet above sea level. That's when I think the latest cerebral incident happened. It isn't so much the loss of hearing and sight but the . . . dimming out of the mind that I can't bear, because until lately, just lately, his mind was amazingly clear. But yesterday? In Taxco? I spent nearly all we had left on the wheelchair for him and still he insisted that we go on with the trip till we got to the sea, the . . . cradle of life as he calls it. . . . [She suddenly notices Nonno, sunk in his chair as if lifeless. She draws a sharp breath, and goes quietly to him.]

SHANNON [to the Mexican boys]:  
Servicio! Aqui! [The force of his

order proves effective: they serve  
the fish course.]

HANNAH:

What a kind man you are. I don't  
know how to thank you, Mr. Shannon.  
I'm going to wake him up now. Nonno!  
[She claps her hands quietly at his  
ear. The old man rouses with a  
confused, breathless chuckle.]  
Nonno, linen napkins. [She removes a  
napkin from the pocket of her  
smock.] I always carry one with me,  
you see, in case we run into paper  
napkins as sometimes happens, you  
see. . . .

NONNO:

Wonderful place here. . . . I hope  
it is à la carte, Hannah, I want a  
very light supper so I won't get  
sleepy. I'm going to work after  
supper. I'm going to finish it here.

HANNAH:

Nonno? We've made a friend here.  
Nonno, this is the Reverend Mr.  
Shannon.

NONNO [struggling out of his  
confusion]: Reverend?

HANNAH [shouting to him]:

Mr. Shannon's an Episcopal  
clergyman, Nonno.

NONNO:

A man of God?

HANNAH:

A man of God, on vacation.

NONNO:

Hannah, tell him I'm too old to  
baptize and too young to bury but on  
the market for marriage to a rich  
widow, fat, fair and forty.

[Nonno is delighted by all of his own little jokes. One can see him exchanging these pleasantries with the rocking-chair brigades of summer hotels at the turn of the century—and with professors' wives at little colleges in New England. But now it has become somewhat grotesque in a touching way, this desire to please, this playful manner, these venerable jokes.]

Shannon goes along with it. The old man touches something in him which is outside of his concern with himself. This part of the scene, which is played in a "scherzo" mood, has an accompanying windy obligato on the hilltop—all through it we hear the wind from the sea gradually rising, sweeping up the hill through the rain forest, and there are fitful glimmers of lightning in the sky.]

NONNO:

But very few ladies ever go past  
forty if you believe 'em, ho, ho!  
Ask him to . . . give the blessing.  
Mexican food needs blessing.

SHANNON:

Sir, you give the blessing. I'll be  
right with you. [He has broken one  
of his shoelaces.]

NONNO:

Tell him I will oblige him on one  
condition.

SHANNON:

What condition, sir?

NONNO:

That you'll keep my daughter company  
when I retire after dinner. I go to  
bed with the chickens and get up  
with the roosters, ho, ho! So you're  
a man of God. A benedict or a  
bachelor?

SHANNON:

Bachelor, sir. No sane and civilized  
woman would have me, Mr. Coffin.

NONNO:

What did he say, Hannah?

HANNAH [embarrassed]:

Nonno, give the blessing.

NONNO [not hearing this]:

I call her my daughter, but she's my  
daughter's daughter. We've been in  
charge of each other since she lost  
both her parents in the very first

automobile crash on the island of  
Nantucket.

HANNAH:

Nonno, give the blessing.

NONNO:

She isn't a modern flapper, she  
isn't modern and she—doesn't flap,  
but she was brought up to be a  
wonderful wife and mother. But . . .  
I'm a selfish old man so I've kept  
her all to myself.

HANNAH [shouting into his ear]:

Nonno, Nonno, the blessing!

NONNO [rising with an effort]:

Yes, the blessing. Bless this food  
to our use, and ourselves to Thy  
service. Amen. [He totters back into  
his chair.]

SHANNON:

Amen.

[Nonno's mind starts drifting, his head drooping forward.  
He murmurs to himself.]

SHANNON:

How good is the old man's poetry?

HANNAH:

My grandfather was a fairly wellknown  
minor poet before the First  
World War and for a little while



after.

SHANNON:

In the minor league, huh?

HANNAH:

Yes, a minor league poet with a major league spirit. I'm proud to be his granddaughter. . . . [She draws a pack of cigarettes from her pocket, then replaces it immediately without taking a cigarette.]

NONNO [very confused]:

Hannah, it's too hot for . . . hot cereals this . . . morning. . . . [He shakes his head several times with a rueful chuckle.]

HANNAH:

He's not quite back, you see, he thinks it's morning. [She says this as if making an embarrassing admission, with a quick, frightened smile at Shannon.]

SHANNON:

Fantastic-fantastic.

HANNAH:

That word "fantastic" seems to be your favorite word, Mr. Shannon.  
SHANNON [looking out gloomily from

the verandah]:

Yeah, well, you know we—live on two levels, Miss Jelkes, the realistic level and the fantastic level, and which is the real one, really. . . .

HANNAH:

I would say both, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

But when you live on the fantastic level as I have lately but have got to operate on the realistic level, that's when you're spooked, that's the spook. . . . [This is said as if it were a private reflection.] I thought I'd shake the spook here but conditions have changed here. I didn't know the patrona had turned to a widow, a sort of bright widow spider. [He chuckles almost like Nonno.]

[Maxine has pushed one of those gay little brass-and-glass liquor carts around the corner of the verandah. It is laden with an ice bucket, coconuts and a variety of liquors. She hums gaily to herself as she pushes the cart close to the table.]

MAXINE:

Cocktails, anybody?

HANNAH:

No, thank you, Mrs. Faulk, I don't  
think we care for any.

SHANNON:

People don't drink cocktails between  
the fish and the entrée, Maxine  
honey.

MAXINE:

Grampa needs a toddy to wake him up.  
Old folks need a toddy to pick 'em  
up. [She shouts into the old man's  
ear.] Grampa! How about a toddy?  
[Her hips are thrust out at  
Shannon.]

SHANNON:

Maxine, your ass—excuse me, Miss  
Jelkes—your hips, Maxine, are too  
fat for this verandah.

MAXINE:

Hah! Mexicans like 'em, if I can  
judge by the pokes and pinches I get  
in the buses to town. And so do the  
Germans. Ev'ry time I go near Herr  
Fahrenkopf he gives me a pinch or a  
goose.

SHANNON:

Then go near him again for another

goose.

MAXINE:

Hah! I'm mixing Grampa a Manhattan  
with two cherries in it so he'll  
live through dinner.

SHANNON:

Go on back to your Nazis, I'll mix  
the Manhattan for him. [He goes to  
the liquor cart.]

MAXINE [to Hannah]:

How about you, honey, a little soda  
with lime juice?

HANNAH:

Nothing for me, thank you.

SHANNON:

Don't make nervous people more  
nervous, Maxine.

MAXINE:

You better let me mix that toddy for  
Grampa, you're making a mess of it,  
Shannon.

[With a snort of fury, he thrusts the liquor cart like a  
battering ram at her belly. Some of the bottles fall off  
it; she thrusts it right back at him.]

HANNAH:

Mrs. Faulk, Mr. Shannon, this is  
childish, please stop it!

[The Germans are attracted by the disturbance. They cluster  
around, laughing delightedly. Shannon and Maxine seize

opposite ends of the rolling liquor cart and thrust it toward each other, both grinning fiercely as gladiators in mortal combat. The Germans shriek with laughter and chatter in German.]

HANNAH:

Mr. Shannon, stop it! [She appeals to the Germans.] Bitte! Nehmen Sie die Spirituosen weg. Bitte, nehmen Sie sie weg.

[Shannon has wrested the cart from Maxine and pushed it at the Germans. They scream delightedly. The cart crashes into the wall of the verandah. Shannon leaps down the steps and runs into the foliage. Birds scream in the rain forest. Then sudden quiet returns to the verandah as the Germans go back to their own table.]

MAXINE:

Crazy, black Irish Protestant son of a . . . Protestant!

HANNAH:

Mrs. Faulk, he's putting up a struggle not to drink.

MAXINE:

Don't interfere. You're an interfering woman.

HANNAH:

Mr. Shannon is dangerously . . . disturbed.

MAXINE:

I know how to handle him, honey—you just met him today. Here's Grampa's Manhattan cocktail with two cherries

in it.

HANNAH:

Please don't call him Grampa.

MAXINE:

Shannon calls him Grampa.

HANNAH [taking the drink]:

He doesn't make it sound  
condescending, but you do. My  
grandfather is a gentleman in the  
true sense of the word, he is a  
gentle man.

MAXINE:

What are you?

HANNAH:

I am his granddaughter.

MAXINE:

Is that all you are?

HANNAH:

I think it's enough to be.

MAXINE:

Yeah, but you're also a deadbeat,  
using that dying old man for a front  
to get in places without the cash to  
pay even one day in advance. Why,  
you're dragging him around with you  
like Mexican beggars carry around a  
sick baby to put the touch on the

tourists.

HANNAH:

I told you I had no money.

MAXINE:

Yes, and I told you that I was a widow—recent. In such a financial hole they might as well have buried me with my husband.

[Shannon reappears from the jungle foliage but remains unnoticed by Hannah and Maxine.]

HANNAH [with forced calm]:

Tomorrow morning, at daybreak, I will go in town. I will set up my easel in the plaza and peddle my water colors and sketch tourists. I am not a weak person, my failure here isn't typical of me.

MAXINE:

I'm not a weak person either.

HANNAH:

No. By no means, no. Your strength is awe-inspiring.

MAXINE:

You're goddam right about that, but how do you think you'll get to Acapulco without the cabfare or even the busfare there?

HANNAH:

I will go on shanks' mare, Mrs.  
Faulk-islanders are good walkers.  
And if you doubt my word for it, if  
you really think I came here as a  
deadbeat, then I will put my  
grandfather back in his wheelchair  
and push him back down this hill to  
the road and all the way back into  
town.

MAXINE:

Ten miles, with a storm coming up?

HANNAH:

Yes, I would—I will. [She is  
dominating Maxine in this exchange.  
Both stand beside the table. Nonno's  
head is drooping back into sleep.]

MAXINE:

I wouldn't let you.

HANNAH:

But you've made it clear that you  
don't want us to stay here for one  
night even.

MAXINE:

The storm would blow that old man  
out of his wheelchair like a dead  
leaf.



HANNAH:

He would prefer that to staying  
where he's not welcome, and I would  
prefer it for him, and for myself,  
Mrs. Faulk. [She turns to the  
Mexican boys.] Where is his  
wheelchair? Where is my  
grandfather's wheelchair?

[This exchange has roused the old man. He struggles up from  
his chair, confused, strikes the floor with his cane and  
starts declaiming a poem.]

NONNO:

Love's an old remembered song  
A drunken fiddler plays,  
Stumbling crazily along  
Crooked alleyways.  
When his heart is mad with music  
He will play the—

HANNAH:

Nonno, not now, Nonno! He thought  
someone asked for a poem. [She gets  
him back into the chair. Hannah and  
Maxine are still unaware of  
Shannon.]

MAXINE:

Calm down, honey.

HANNAH:

I'm perfectly calm, Mrs. Faulk.

MAXINE:

I'm not. That's the trouble.

HANNAH:

I understand that, Mrs. Faulk. You lost your husband just lately. I think you probably miss him more than you know.

MAXINE:

No, the trouble is Shannon.

HANNAH:

You mean his nervous state and his . . . ?

MAXINE:

No, I just mean Shannon. I want you to lay off him, honey. You're not for Shannon and Shannon isn't for you.

HANNAH:

Mrs. Faulk, I'm a New England spinster who is pushing forty.

MAXINE:

I got the vibrations between you—I'm very good at catching vibrations between people—and there sure was a vibration between you and Shannon the moment you got here. That, just that, believe me, nothing but that

has made this . . . misunderstanding  
between us. So if you just don't  
mess with Shannon, you and your  
Grampa can stay on here as long as  
you want to, honey.

HANNAH:

Oh, Mrs. Faulk, do I look like a  
vamp?

MAXINE:

They come in all types. I've had all  
types of them here.

[Shannon comes over to the table.]

SHANNON:

Maxine, I told you don't make  
nervous people more nervous, but you  
wouldn't listen.

MAXINE:

What you need is a drink.

SHANNON:

Let me decide about that.

HANNAH:

Won't you sit down with us, Mr.  
Shannon, and eat something? Please.

You'll feel better.

SHANNON:

I'm not hungry right now.

HANNAH:

Well, just sit down with us, won't  
you?

[Shannon sits down with Hannah.]

MAXINE [warningly to Hannah]:

O.K. O.K. . . .

NONNO [rousing a bit and mumbling]:

Wonderful . . . wonderful place  
here.

[Maxine retires from the table and wheels the liquor cart  
over to the German party.]

SHANNON:

Would you have gone through with it?

HANNAH:

Haven't you ever played poker, Mr.  
Shannon?

SHANNON:

You mean you were bluffing?

HANNAH:

Let's say I was drawing to an inside  
straight. [The wind rises and sweeps  
up the hill like a great waking sigh  
from the ocean.] It is going to  
storm. I hope your ladies aren't  
still out in that, that . . . glassbottomed  
boat, observing the, uh,  
submarine . . . marvels.

SHANNON:

That's because you don't know these ladies. However, they're back from the boat trip. They're down at the cantina, dancing together to the jukebox and hatching new plots to get me kicked out of Blake Tours.

HANNAH:

What would you do if you. . . .

SHANNON:

Got the sack? Go back to the Church or take the long swim to China.

[Hannah removes a crumpled pack of cigarettes from her pocket. She discovers only two left in the pack and decides to save them for later. She returns the pack to her pocket.]

May I have one of your cigarettes, Miss Jelkes? [She offers him the pack. He takes it from her and crumples it and throws it off the verandah.] Never smoke those, they're made out of tobacco from cigarette stubs that beggars pick up off sidewalks and out of gutters in Mexico City. [He produces a tin of English cigarettes.] Have these— Benson and Hedges, imported, in an

airtight tin, my luxury in my life.

HANNAH:

Why—thank you, I will, since you  
have thrown mine away.

SHANNON:

I'm going to tell you something  
about yourself. You are a lady, a  
real one and a great one.

HANNAH:

What have I done to merit that  
compliment from you?

SHANNON:

It isn't a compliment, it's just a  
report on what I've noticed about  
you at a time when it's hard for me  
to notice anything outside myself.

You took out those Mexican  
cigarettes, you found you just had  
two left, you can't afford to buy a  
new pack of even that cheap brand,  
so you put them away for later.

Right?

HANNAH:

Mercilessly accurate, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

But when I asked you for one, you  
offered it to me without a sign of

reluctance.

HANNAH:

Aren't you making a big point out of  
a small matter?

SHANNON:

Just the opposite, honey, I'm making  
a small point out of a very large  
matter. [Shannon has put a cigarette  
in his lips but has no matches.  
Hannah has some and she lights his  
cigarette for him.] How'd you learn  
how to light a match in the wind?

HANNAH:

Oh, I've learned lots of useful  
little things like that. I wish I'd  
learned some big ones.

SHANNON:

Such as what?

HANNAH:

How to help you, Mr. Shannon. . . .

SHANNON:

Now I know why I came here!

HANNAH:

To meet someone who can light a  
match in the wind?

SHANNON [looking down at the table,  
his voice choking]:

To meet someone who wants to help me, Miss Jelkes. . . . [He makes a quick, embarrassed turn in the chair, as if to avoid her seeing that he has tears in his eyes. She regards him steadily and tenderly, as she would her grandfather.]

HANNAH:

Has it been so long since anyone has wanted to help you, or have you just. . . .

SHANNON:

Have I—what?

HANNAH:

Just been so much involved with a struggle in yourself that you haven't noticed when people have wanted to help you, the little they can? I know people torture each other many times like devils, but sometimes they do see and know each other, you know, and then, if they're decent, they do want to help each other all that they can. Now will you please help me? Take care of Nonno while I remove my water colors from the annex verandah



because the storm is coming up by  
leaps and bounds now.

[He gives a quick, jerky nod, dropping his face briefly into the cup of his hands. She murmurs "Thank you" and springs up, starting along the verandah. Halfway across, as the storm closes in upon the hilltop with a thunderclap and a sound of rain coming, Hannah turns to look back at the table. Shannon has risen and gone around the table to Nonno.]

SHANNON:

Grampa? Nonno? Let's get up before  
the rain hits us, Grampa.

NONNO:

What? What?

[Shannon gets the old man out of his chair and shepherds him to the back of the verandah as Hannah rushes toward the annex. The Mexican boys hastily clear the table, fold it up and lean it against the wall. Shannon and Nonno turn and face toward the storm, like brave men facing a firing squad.

Maxine is excitedly giving orders to the boys.]

MAXINE:

Pronto, pronto, muchachos! Pronto,  
pronto! Llevaros todas las cosas!  
Pronto, pronto! Recoje los platos!  
Apurate con el mantel!\*

PEDRO:

Nos estamos dando prisa!

PANCHO:

Que el chubasco lave los platos!

[The German party look on the storm as a Wagnerian climax.]

They rise from their table as the boys come to clear it, and start singing exultantly. The storm, with its white convulsions of light, is like a giant white bird attacking the hilltop of the Costa Verde. Hannah reappears with her water colors clutched against her chest.]

SHANNON:

Got them?

HANNAH:

Yes, just in time. Here is your God,  
Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON [quietly]:

Yes, I see him, I hear him, I know  
him. And if he doesn't know that I  
know him, let him strike me dead  
with a bolt of his lightning.

[He moves away from the wall to the edge of the verandah as a fine silver sheet of rain descends off the sloping roof, catching the light and dimming the figures behind it. Now everything is silver, delicately lustrous. Shannon extends his hands under the rainfall, turning them in it as if to cool them. Then he cups them to catch the water in his palms and bathes his forehead with it. The rainfall increases. The sound of the marimba band at the beach cantina is brought up the hill by the wind. Shannon lowers his hands from his burning forehead and stretches them out through the rain's silver sheet as if he were reaching for something outside and beyond himself. Then nothing is visible but these reaching out hands. A pure white flash of lightning reveals Hannah and Nonno against the wall, behind Shannon, and the electric globe suspended from the roof goes out, the power extinguished by the storm. A clear shaft of light stays on Shannon's reaching-out hands.]

FADE OUT

EXT. OUTSIDE COSTA VERDE HOTEL-NIGHT

FADE IN

The verandah, several hours later. Cubicles number 3, 4, and 5 are dimly lighted within. We see Hannah in number 3, and Nonno in number 4. Shannon, who has taken off his shirt, is seated at a table on the verandah, writing a letter to his bishop. All but this table have been folded and stacked against the wall and Maxine is putting the hammock back up which had been taken down for dinner. The electric power is still off and the cubicles are lighted by oil lamps. The sky has cleared completely, the moon is making for full and it bathes the scene in an almost garish silver which is intensified by the wetness from the recent rainstorm.

Everything is drenched—there are pools of silver here and there on the floor of the verandah. At one side a smudge-pot is burning to repel the mosquitoes, which are particularly vicious after a tropical downpour when the wind is exhausted.

Shannon is working feverishly on the letter to the bishop, now and then slapping at a mosquito on his bare torso. He is shiny with perspiration, still breathing like a spent runner, muttering to himself as he writes and sometimes suddenly drawing a loud deep breath and simultaneously throwing back his head to stare up wildly at the night sky. Hannah is seated on a straight-back chair behind the mosquito netting in her cubicle—very straight herself, holding a small book in her hands but looking steadily over it at Shannon, like a guardian angel. Her hair has been let down. Nonno can be seen in his cubicle rocking back and forth on the edge of the narrow bed as he goes over and over the lines of his first new poem in "twenty-some years"—which he knows is his last one.

Now and then the sound of distant music drifts up from the beach cantina.

MAXINE:

Workin' on your sermon for next

Sunday, Rev' rend?

SHANNON:

I'm writing a very important letter,

Maxine. [He means don't disturb me.]

MAXINE:

Who to, Shannon?

SHANNON:

The Dean of the Divinity School at Sewanee. [Maxine repeats "Sewanee" to herself, tolerantly.] Yes, and I'd appreciate it very much, Maxine honey, if you'd get Pedro or Pancho to drive into town with it tonight so it will go out first thing in the morning.

MAXINE:

The kids took off in the station wagon already—for some cold beers and hot whores at the cantina.

SHANNON:

"Fred's dead"—he's lucky. . . .

MAXINE:

Don't misunderstand me about Fred, baby. I miss him, but we'd not only stopped sleeping together, we'd stopped talking together except in grunts—no quarrels, no misunderstandings, but if we exchanged two grunts in the course of a day, it was a long conversation we'd had that day between us.

SHANNON:

Fred knew when I was spooked—  
wouldn't have to tell him. He'd just  
look at me and say, "Well, Shannon,  
you're spooked."

MAXINE:

Yeah, well, Fred and me'd reached  
the point of just grunting.

SHANNON:

Maybe he thought you'd turned into a  
pig, Maxine.

MAXINE:

Hah! You know damn well that Fred  
respected me, Shannon, like I did  
Fred. We just, well, you know . . .  
age difference. . . .

SHANNON:

Well, you've got Pedro and Pancho.

MAXINE:

Employees. They don't respect me  
enough. When you let employees get  
too free with you, personally, they  
stop respecting you, Shannon. And  
it's, well, it's . . . humiliating—  
not to be . . . respected.

SHANNON:

Then take more bus trips to town for  
the Mexican pokes and the pinches,

or get Herr Fahrenkopf to "respect"  
you, honey.

MAXINE:

Hah! You kill me. I been thinking lately of selling out here and going back to the States, to Texas, and operating a tourist camp outside some live town like Houston or Dallas, on a highway, and renting out cabins to business executives wanting a comfortable little intimate little place to give a little after-hours dictation to their cute little secretaries that can't type or write shorthand. Complimentary rum-cocos-bathrooms with bidets. I'll introduce the bidet to the States.

SHANNON:

Does everything have to wind up on that level with you, Maxine?

MAXINE:

Yes and no, baby. I know the difference between loving someone and just sleeping with someone—even I know about that. [He starts to rise.] We've both reached a point

where we've got to settle for something that works for us in our lives—even if it isn't on the highest kind of level.

SHANNON:

I don't want to rot.

MAXINE:

You wouldn't. I wouldn't let you! I know your psychological history. I remember one of your conversations on this verandah with Fred. You was explaining to him how your problems first started. You told him that Mama, your Mama, used to send you to bed before you was ready to sleep—so you practiced the little boy's vice, you amused yourself with yourself. And once she caught you at it and whaled your backside with the back side of a hairbrush because she said she had to punish you for it because it made God mad as much as it did Mama, and she had to punish you for it so God wouldn't punish you for it harder than she would.

SHANNON:

I was talking to Fred.

MAXINE:

Yeah, but I heard it, all of it. You said you loved God and Mama and so you quit it to please them, but it was your secret pleasure and you harbored a secret resentment against Mama and God for making you give it up. And so you got back at God by preaching atheistical sermons and you got back at Mama by starting to lay young girls.

SHANNON:

I have never delivered an atheistical sermon, and never would or could when I go back to the Church.

MAXINE:

You're not going back to no Church.

Did you mention the charge of statutory rape to the divinity dean?

SHANNON [thrusting his chair back so vehemently that it topples over]:

Why don't you let up on me? You haven't let up on me since I got here this morning! Let up on me!



Will you please let up on me?

MAXINE [smiling serenely into his  
rage.]:

Aw baby. . . .

SHANNON:

What do you mean by "aw baby"? What  
do you want out of me, Maxine honey?

MAXINE:

Just to do this. [She runs her  
fingers through his hair. He thrusts  
her hand away.]

SHANNON:

Ah, God. [Words fail him. He shakes  
his head with a slight, helpless  
laugh and goes down the steps from  
the verandah.]

MAXINE:

The Chinaman in the kitchen says,  
"No sweat." . . . "No sweat." He  
says that's all his philosophy. All  
the Chinese philosophy in three  
words, "Mei yoo guanchi"—which is  
Chinese for "No sweat." . . . With  
your record and a charge of  
statutory rape hanging over you in  
Texas, how could you go to a church  
except to the Holy Rollers with some

lively young female rollers and a bushel of hay on the church floor?

SHANNON:

I'll drive into town in the bus to post this letter tonight. [He has started toward the path. There are sounds below. He divides the masking foliage with his hands and looks down the hill.]

MAXINE [descending the steps from the verandah]:

Watch out for the spook, he's out there.

SHANNON:

My ladies are up to something. They're all down there on the road, around the bus.

MAXINE:

They're running out on you, Shannon.

[She comes up beside him. He draws back and she looks down the hill. The light in number 3 cubicle comes on and Hannah rises from the little table that she had cleared for letter writing.]

She removes her Kabuki robe from a hook and puts it on as an actor puts on a costume in his dressing room.

Nonno's cubicle is also lighted dimly. He sits on the edge of his cot, rocking slightly back and forth, uttering an indistinguishable mumble of lines from his poem.]

MAXINE:

Yeah. There's a little fat man down there that looks like Jake Latta to me. Yep, that's Jake, that's Latta.

I reckon Blake Tours has sent him here to take over your party, Shannon. [Shannon looks out over the jungle and lights a cigarette with jerky fingers.] Well, let him do it. No sweat! He's coming up here now. Want me to handle it for you?

SHANNON:

I'll handle it for myself. You keep out of it, please.

[He speaks with a desperate composure. Hannah stands just behind the curtain of her cubicle, motionless as a painted figure, during the scene that follows. Jake Latta comes puffing up the verandah steps, beaming genially.]

LATTA:

Hi there, Larry.

SHANNON:

Hello, Jake. [He folds his letter into an envelope.] Mrs. Faulk honey, this goes air special.

MAXINE:

First you'd better address it.

SHANNON:

Oh!

[Shannon laughs and snatches the letter back, fumbling in his pocket for an address book, his fingers shaking uncontrollably. Latta winks at Maxine. She smiles tolerantly.]

LATTA:

How's our boy doin', Maxine?

MAXINE:

He'd feel better if I could get him  
to take a drink.

LATTA:

Can't you get a drink down him?

MAXINE:

Nope, not even a rum-coco.

LATTA:

Let's have a rum-coco, Larry.

SHANNON:

You have a rum-coco, Jake. I have a party of ladies to take care of. And I've discovered that situations come up in this business that call for cold, sober judgment. How about you?

Haven't you ever made that discovery, Jake? What're you doing here? Are you here with a party?

LATTA:

I'm here to pick up your party,

Larry boy.

SHANNON:

That's interesting! On whose  
authority, Jake?

LATTA:

Blake Tours wired me in Cuernavaca  
to pick up your party here and put  
them together with mine cause you'd  
had this little nervous upset of  
yours and. . . .

SHANNON:

Show me the wire! Huh?

LATTA:

The bus driver says you took the  
ignition key to the bus.

SHANNON:

That's right. I have the ignition  
key to the bus and I have this party  
and neither the bus or the party  
will pull out of here till I say so.

LATTA:

Larry, you're a sick boy. Don't give  
me trouble.

SHANNON:

What jail did they bail you out of,  
you fat zero?

LATTA:

Let's have the bus key, Larry.

SHANNON:

Where did they dig you up? You've  
got no party in Cuernavaca, you  
haven't been out with a party since  
'thirty-seven.

LATTA:

Just give me the bus key, Larry.

SHANNON:

In a pig's-snout!--like yours!

LATTA:

Where is the reverend's bedroom,  
Mrs. Faulk?

SHANNON:

The bus key is in my pocket. [He  
slaps his pants pocket fiercely.]  
Here, right here, in my pocket! Want  
it? Try and get it, Fatso!

LATTA:

What language for a reverend to use,  
Mrs. Faulk. . . .

SHANNON [holding up the key]:  
See it? [He thrusts it back into his  
pocket.] Now go back wherever you  
crawled from. My party of ladies is  
staying here three more days because  
several of them are in no condition  
to travel and neither-neither am I.

LATTA:

They're getting in the bus now.

SHANNON:

How are you going to start it?

LATTA:

Larry, don't make me call the bus driver up here to hold you down while I get that key away from you. You want to see the wire from Blake Tours? Here. [He produces the wire.]

Read it.

SHANNON:

You sent that wire to yourself.

LATTA:

From Houston?

SHANNON:

You had it sent you from Houston. What's that prove? Why, Blake Tours was nothing, nothing!—till they got me. You think they'd let me go?—Ho, ho! Latta, it's caught up with you, Latta, all the whores and tequila have hit your brain now, Latta. [Latta shouts down the hill for the bus driver.] Don't you realize what I mean to Blake Tours? Haven't you seen the brochure in which they

mention, they brag, that special parties are conducted by the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, D.D., noted world traveler, lecturer, son of a minister and grandson of a bishop, and the direct descendant of two colonial governors? [Miss Fellowes appears at the verandah steps.] Miss Fellowes has read the brochure, she's memorized the brochure. She knows what it says about me.

MISS FELLOWES [to Latta]:

Have you got the bus key?

LATTA:

Bus driver's going to get it away from him, lady. [He lights a cigar with dirty, shaky fingers.]

SHANNON:

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! [His laughter shakes him back against the verandah wall.]

LATTA:

He's gone. [He touches his forehead.]

SHANNON:

Why, those ladies . . . have had . .



. some of them, most of them if not  
all of them . . . for the first time  
in their lives the advantage of  
contact, social contact, with a  
gentleman born and bred, whom under  
no other circumstances they could  
have possibly met . . . let alone be  
given the chance to insult and  
accuse and. . . .

MISS FELLOWES:

Shannon! The girls are in the bus  
and we want to go now, so give up  
that key. Now!

[Hank, the bus driver, appears at  
the top of the path, whistling  
casually: he is not noticed at  
first.]

SHANNON:

If I didn't have a decent sense of  
responsibility to these parties I  
take out, I would gladly turn over  
your party—because I don't like your  
party—to this degenerate here, this  
Jake Latta of the gutter-rat Lattas.  
Yes, I would—I would surrender the  
bus key in my pocket, even to Latta,  
but I am not that irresponsible, no,

I'm not, to the parties that I take out, regardless of the party's treatment of me. I still feel responsible for them till I get them back wherever I picked them up. [Hank comes onto the verandah.] Hi, Hank. Are you friend or foe?

HANK:

Larry, I got to get that ignition key now so we can get moving down there.

SHANNON:

Oh! Then foe! I'm disappointed, Hank. I thought you were friend, not foe. [Hank puts a wrestler's armlock on Shannon and Latta removes the bus key from his pocket. Hannah raises a hand to her eyes.] O.K., O.K., you've got the bus key. By force. I feel exonerated now of all responsibility. Take the bus and the ladies in it and go. Hey, Jake, did you know they had Lesbians in Texas—without the dikes the plains of Texas would be engulfed by the Gulf. [He nods his head violently toward Miss Fellowes, who springs forward

and slaps him.] Thank you, Miss Fellowes. Latta, hold on a minute. I will not be stranded here. I've had unusual expenses on this trip. Right now I don't have my fare back to Houston or even to Mexico City. Now if there's any truth in your statement that Blake Tours have really authorized you to take over my party, then I am sure they have . . . [He draws a breath, almost gasping.] . . . I'm sure they must have given you something in the . . . the nature of . . . severance pay? Or at least enough to get me back to the States?

LATTA:

I got no money for you.

SHANNON:

I hate to question your word, but. . .

. . .

LATTA:

We'll drive you back to Mexico City.

You can sit up front with the driver.

SHANNON:

You would do that, Latta. I'd find

it humiliating. Now! Give me my  
severance pay!

LATTA:

Blake Tours is having to refund  
those ladies half the price of the  
tour. That's your severance pay. And

Miss Fellowes tells me you got  
plenty of money out of this young  
girl you seduced in. . . .

SHANNON:

Miss Fellowes, did you really make  
such a . . . ?

MISS FELLOWES:

When Charlotte returned that night,  
she'd cashed two traveler's checks.

SHANNON:

After I had spent all my own cash.

MISS FELLOWES:

On what? Whores in the filthy places  
you took her through?

SHANNON:

Miss Charlotte cashed two ten-dollar  
traveler's checks because I had  
spent all the cash I had on me. And  
I've never had to, I've certainly  
never desired to, have relations  
with whores.

MISS FELLOWES:

You took her through ghastly places,  
such as. . . .

SHANNON:

I showed her what she wanted me to  
show her. Ask her! I showed her San  
Juan de Letran, I showed her Tenampa  
and some other places not listed in  
the Blake Tours brochure. I showed  
her more than the floating gardens  
at Xochimilco, Maximilian's Palace,  
and the mad Empress Carlotta's  
little homesick chapel, Our Lady of  
Guadalupe, the monument to Juarez,  
the relics of the Aztec  
civilization, the sword of Cortez,  
the headdress of Montezuma. I showed  
her what she told me she wanted to  
see. Where is she? Where is Miss . .  
. oh, down there with the ladies.  
[He leans over the rail and shouts  
down.] Charlotte! Charlotte! [Miss  
Fellowes seizes his arm and thrusts  
him away from the verandah rail.]

MISS FELLOWES:

Don't you dare!

SHANNON:

Dare what?

MISS FELLOWES:

Call her, speak to her, go near her,  
you, you . . . filthy!

[Maxine reappears at the corner of the verandah, with the ceremonial rapidity of a cuckoo bursting from a clock to announce the hour. She just stands there with an incongruous grin, her big eyes unblinking, as if they were painted on her round beaming face. Hannah holds a gold-lacquered Japanese fan motionless but open in one hand; the other hand touches the netting at the cubicle door as if she were checking an impulse to rush to Shannon's defense. Her attitude has the style of a Kabuki dancer's pose. Shannon's manner becomes courtly again.]

SHANNON:

Oh, all right, I won't. I only  
wanted her to confirm my story that  
I took her out that night at her  
request, not at my . . . suggestion.  
All that I did was offer my services  
to her when she told me she'd like  
to see things not listed in the  
brochure, not usually witnessed by  
ordinary tourists such as. . . .

MISS FELLOWES:

Your hotel bedroom? Later? That too?  
She came back flea-bitten!

SHANNON:

Oh, now, don't exaggerate, please.  
Nobody ever got any fleas off  
Shannon.

MISS FELLOWES:

Her clothes had to be fumigated!

SHANNON:

I understand your annoyance, but you are going too far when you try to make out that I gave Charlotte fleas. I don't deny that. . . .

MISS FELLOWES:

Wait till they get my report!

SHANNON:

I don't deny that it's possible to get fleabites on a tour of inspection of what lies under the public surface of cities, off the grand boulevards, away from the night clubs, even away from Diego Rivera's murals, but. . . .

MISS FELLOWES:

Oh, preach that in a pulpit,  
Reverend Shannon de-frocked!

SHANNON [ominously]:

You've said that once too often. [He seizes her arm.] This time before witnesses. Miss Jelkes? Miss Jelkes!

[Hannah opens the curtain of her cubicle.]

HANNAH:

Yes, Mr. Shannon, what is it?

SHANNON:

You heard what this. . . .

MISS FELLOWES:

Shannon! Take your hand off my arm!

SHANNON:

Miss Jelkes, just tell me, did you hear what she . . . [His voice stops oddly with a choked sobbing sound. He runs at the wall and pounds it with his fists.]

MISS FELLOWES:

I spent this entire afternoon and over twenty dollars checking up on this impostor, with long-distance phone calls.

HANNAH:

Not impostor—you mustn't say things like that.

MISS FELLOWES:

You were locked out of your church!—for atheism and seducing of girls!

SHANNON [turning about]:

In front of God and witnesses, you are lying, lying!

LATTA:

Miss Fellowes, I want you to know



that Blake Tours was deceived about  
this character's background and  
Blake Tours will see that he is  
blacklisted from now on at every  
travel agency in the States.

SHANNON:

How about Africa, Asia, Australia?  
The whole world, Latta, God's world,  
has been the range of my travels. I  
haven't stuck to the schedules of  
the brochures and I've always  
allowed the ones that were willing  
to see, to see!—the underworlds of  
all places, and if they had hearts  
to be touched, feelings to feel  
with, I gave them a priceless chance  
to feel and be touched. And none  
will ever forget it, none of them,  
ever, never! [The passion of his  
speech imposes a little stillness.]

LATTA:

Go on, lie back in your hammock,  
that's all you're good for, Shannon.  
[He goes to the top of the path and  
shouts down the hill.] O.K., let's  
get cracking. Get that luggage  
strapped on top of the bus, we're

moving! [He starts down the hill  
with Miss Fellowes.]

NONNO [incongruously, from his  
cubicle]:

How calmly does the orange branch  
Observe the sky begin to blanch. .

. . .

[Shannon sucks in his breath with an abrupt, fierce sound. He rushes off the verandah and down the path toward the road.]

Hannah calls after him, with a restraining gesture. Maxine appears on the verandah. Then a great commotion commences below the hill, with shrieks of outrage and squeals of shocked laughter.]

MAXINE [rushing to the path]:

Shannon! Shannon! Get back up here,  
get back up here. Pedro, Pancho,  
traerme a Shannon. Que está haciendo  
allí? Oh, my God! Stop him, for  
God's sake, somebody stop him!

[Shannon returns, panting and spent. He is followed by Maxine.]

MAXINE:

Shannon, go in your room and stay  
there until that party's gone.

SHANNON:

Don't give me orders.

MAXINE:

You do what I tell you to do or I'll  
have you removed—you know where.

SHANNON:

Don't push me, don't pull at me,  
Maxine.

MAXINE:

All right, do as I say.

SHANNON:

Shannon obeys only Shannon.

MAXINE:

You'll sing a different tune if they  
put you where they put you in  
'thirty-six. Remember 'thirty-six,  
Shannon?

SHANNON:

O.K., Maxine, just . . . let me  
breathe alone, please. I won't go  
but I will lie in the . . . hammock.

MAXINE:

Go into Fred's room where I can  
watch you.

SHANNON:

Later, Maxine, not yet.

MAXINE:

Why do you always come here to crack  
up, Shannon?

SHANNON:

It's the hammock, Maxine, the  
hammock by the rain forest.

MAXINE:

Shannon, go in your room and stay there until I get back. Oh, my God, the money. They haven't paid the mother-grabbin' bill. I got to go back down there and collect their goddam bill before they. . . . Pancho, vijilalo, entiendes? [She rushes back down the hill, shouting "Hey! Just a minute down there!"]

SHANNON:

What did I do? [He shakes his head, stunned.] I don't know what I did.

[Hannah opens the screen of her cubicle but doesn't come out.]

She is softly lighted so that she looks, again, like a medieval sculpture of a saint. Her pale gold hair catches the soft light. She has let it down and still holds the silverbacked brush with which she was brushing it.]

SHANNON:

God almighty, I . . . what did I do?  
I don't know what I did. [He turns to the Mexican boys who have come back up the path.] Que hice? Que hice?

[There is breathless, spasmodic laughter from the boys as Pancho informs him that he pissed on the ladies' luggage.]

PANCHO:

Tú measte en las maletas de las señoras!

[Shannon tries to laugh with the boys, while they bend double with amusement. Shannon's laughter dies out in little choked spasms. Down the hill, Maxine's voice is raised in angry altercation with Jake Latta. Miss Fellowes' voice is lifted and then there is a general rhubarb to which is added the roar of the bus motor.]

SHANNON:

There go my ladies, ha, ha! There go  
my . . . [He turns about to meet  
Hannah's grave, compassionate gaze.  
He tries to laugh again. She shakes  
her head with a slight restraining  
gesture and drops the curtain so  
that her softly luminous figure is  
seen as through a mist.] . . .  
ladies, the last of my—ha, ha!—  
ladies.

[He bends far over the verandah rail, then straightens violently and with an animal outcry begins to pull at the chain suspending the gold cross about his neck. Pancho watches indifferently as the chain cuts the back of Shannon's neck. Hannah rushes out to him.]

HANNAH:

Mr. Shannon, stop that! You're  
cutting yourself doing that. That  
isn't necessary, so stop it! [to  
Pancho:] Agarrale las manos! [Pancho  
makes a halfhearted effort to  
comply, but Shannon kicks at him and  
goes on with the furious selflaceration.]  
Shannon, let me do it,

let me take it off you. Can I take  
it off you?

[He drops his arms. She  
struggles with the clasp of the  
chain but her fingers are too shaky  
to work it.]

SHANNON:

No, no, it won't come off, I'll have  
to break it off me.

HANNAH:

No, no, wait—I've got it. [She has  
now removed it.]

SHANNON:

Thanks. Keep it. Goodbye! [He starts  
toward the path down to the beach.]

HANNAH:

Where are you going? What are you  
going to do?

SHANNON:

I'm going swimming. I'm going to  
swim out to China!

HANNAH:

No, no, not tonight, Shannon!

Tomorrow . . . tomorrow, Shannon!

[But he divides the trumpet-flowered bushes and passes  
through them. Hannah rushes after him, screaming for "Mrs.  
Faulk." Maxine can be heard shouting for the Mexican boys.]

MAXINE:

Muchachos, cojerlo! Atarlo! Esté loco. Traerlo aqui. Catch him, he's crazy. Bring him back and tie him up!

[In a few moments Shannon is hauled back through the bushes and onto the verandah by Maxine and the boys. They rope him into the hammock. His struggle is probably not much of a real struggle—histrionics mostly. But Hannah stands wringing her hands by the steps as Shannon, gasping for breath, is tied up.]

HANNAH:

The ropes are too tight on his chest!

MAXINE:

No, they're not. He's acting, acting. He likes it! I know this black Irish bastard like nobody ever knowed him, so you keep out of it, honey. He cracks up like this so regular that you can set a calendar by it. Every eighteen months he does it, and twice he's done it here and I've had to pay for his medical care. Now I'm going to call in town to get a doctor to come out here and give him a knockout injection, and if he's not better tomorrow he's going into the Casa de Locos again like he did the last time he cracked

up on me!

[There is a moment of silence.]

SHANNON:

Miss Jelkes?

HANNAH:

Yes.

SHANNON:

Where are you?

HANNAH:

I'm right here behind you. Can I do  
anything for you?

SHANNON:

Sit here where I can see you. Don't  
stop talking. I have to fight this  
panic.

[There is a pause. She moves a chair beside his hammock. The Germans troop up from the beach. They are delighted by the drama that Shannon has provided. In their scanty swimsuits they parade onto the verandah and gather about Shannon's captive figure as if they were looking at a funny animal in a zoo. Their talk is in German except when they speak directly to Shannon or Hannah. Their heavily handsome figures gleam with oily wetness and they keep chuckling lubriciously.]

HANNAH:

Please! Will you be so kind as to  
leave him alone?

[They pretend not to understand her. Frau Fahrenkopf bends over Shannon in his hammock and speaks to him loudly and slowly in English.]

FRAU FAHRENKOPF:



Is this true you make pee-pee all  
over the suitcases of the ladies  
from Texas? Hah? Hah? You run down  
there to the bus and right in front  
of the ladies you pees all over the  
luggage of the ladies from Texas?

[Hannah's indignant protest is drowned in the Rabelaisian  
laughter of the Germans.]

HERR FAHRENKOPF:

Thees is vunderbar, vunderbar! Hah?  
Thees is a epic gesture! Hah? Thees  
is the way to demonstrate to ladies  
that you are a American gentleman!

Hah?

[He turns to the others and makes a ribald comment. The two  
women shriek with amusement, Hilda falling back into the  
arms of Wolfgang, who catches her with his hands over her  
almost nude breasts.]

HANNAH [calling out]:

Mrs. Faulk! Mrs. Faulk! [She rushes  
to the verandah angle as Maxine  
appears there.] Will you please ask  
these people to leave him alone.  
They're tormenting him like an  
animal in a trap.

[The Germans are already trooping around the verandah,  
laughing and capering gaily.]

SHANNON [suddenly, in a great  
shout]: Regression to infantilism,

ha, ha, regression to infantilism .  
. . The infantile protest, ha, ha,  
ha, the infantile expression of rage  
at Mama and rage at God and rage at  
the goddam crib, and rage at the  
everything, rage at the . . .  
everything. . . . Regression to  
infantilism. . . .

[Now all have left but Hannah and Shannon.]

SHANNON:

Untie me.

HANNAH:

Not yet.

SHANNON:

I can't stand being tied up.

HANNAH:

You'll have to stand it a while.

SHANNON:

It makes me panicky.

HANNAH:

I know.

SHANNON:

A man can die of panic.

HANNAH:

Not if he enjoys it as much as you,

Mr. Shannon.

[She goes into her cubicle directly behind his hammock. The cubicle is lighted and we see her removing a small teapot

and a tin of tea from her suitcase on the cot, then a little alcohol burner. She comes back out with these articles.]

SHANNON:

What did you mean by that insulting remark?

HANNAH:

What remark, Mr. Shannon?

SHANNON:

That I enjoy it.

HANNAH:

Oh . . . that.

SHANNON:

Yes. That.

HANNAH:

That wasn't meant as an insult, just an observation. I don't judge people, I draw them. That's all I do, just draw them, but in order to draw them I have to observe them, don't I?

SHANNON:

And you've observed, you think you've observed, that I like being tied in this hammock, trussed up in it like a hog being hauled off to

the slaughter house, Miss Jelkes.

HANNAH:

Who wouldn't like to suffer and atone for the sins of himself and the world if it could be done in a hammock with ropes instead of nails, on a hill that's so much lovelier than Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, Mr. Shannon? There's something almost voluptuous in the way that you twist and groan in that hammock—no nails, no blood, no death. Isn't that a comparatively comfortable, almost voluptuous kind of crucifixion to suffer for the guilt of the world, Mr. Shannon?

[She strikes a match to light the alcohol burner. A pure blue jet of flame springs up to cast a flickering, rather unearthly glow on their section of the verandah. The glow is delicately refracted by the subtle, jaded colors of her robe—a robe given to her by a Kabuki actor who posed for her in Japan.]

SHANNON:

Why have you turned against me all of a sudden, when I need you the most?

HANNAH:

I haven't turned against you at all, Mr. Shannon. I'm just attempting to give you a character sketch of

yourself, in words instead of pastel  
crayons or charcoal.

SHANNON:

You're certainly suddenly very sure  
of some New England spinsterish  
attitudes that I didn't know you had  
in you. I thought that you were an  
emancipated Puritan, Miss Jelkes.

HANNAH:

Who is . . . ever . . . completely?

SHANNON:

I thought you were sexless but  
you've suddenly turned into a woman.  
Know how I know that? Because you,  
not me—not me—are taking pleasure in  
my tied-up condition. All women,  
whether they face it or not, want to  
see a man in a tied-up situation.  
They work at it all their lives, to  
get a man in a tied-up situation.  
Their lives are fulfilled, they're  
satisfied at last, when they get a  
man, or as many men as they can, in  
the tied-up situation. [Hannah  
leaves the alcohol burner and teapot  
and moves to the railing where she  
grips a verandah post and draws a

few deep breaths.] You don't like this observation of you? The shoe's too tight for comfort when it's on your own foot, Miss Jelkes? Some deep breaths again—feeling panic? HANNAH [recovering and returning to

the burner]:

I'd like to untie you right now, but let me wait till you've passed through your present disturbance. You're still indulging yourself in your . . . your Passion Play performance. I can't help observing this self-indulgence in you.

SHANNON:

What rotten indulgence?

HANNAH:

Well, your busload of ladies from the female college in Texas. I don't like those ladies any more than you do, but after all, they did save up all year to make this Mexican tour, to stay in stuffy hotels and eat the food they're used to. They want to be at home away from home, but you . . . you indulged yourself, Mr. Shannon. You did conduct the tour as

if it was just for you, for your own  
pleasure.

SHANNON:

Hell, what pleasure—going through  
hell all the way?

HANNAH:

Yes, but comforted, now and then,  
weren't you, by the little musical  
prodigy under the wing of the  
college vocal instructor?

SHANNON:

Funny, ha-ha funny! Nantucket  
spinsters have their wry humor,  
don't they?

HANNAH:

Yes, they do. They have to.

SHANNON [becoming progressively  
quieter under the cool influence of  
her voice behind him]:

I can't see what you're up to, Miss  
Jelkes honey, but I'd almost swear  
you're making a pot of tea over  
there.

HANNAH:

That is just what I'm doing.

SHANNON:

Does this strike you as the right

time for a tea party?

HANNAH:

This isn't plain tea, this is poppyseed  
tea.

SHANNON:

Are you a slave to the poppy?

HANNAH:

It's a mild, sedative drink that  
helps you get through nights that  
are hard for you to get through and  
I'm making it for my grandfather and  
myself as well as for you, Mr.  
Shannon. Because, for all three of  
us, this won't be an easy night to  
get through. Can't you hear him in  
his cell number 4, mumbling over and  
over and over the lines of his new  
poem? It's like a blind man climbing  
a staircase that goes to nowhere,  
that just falls off into space, and  
I hate to say what it is. . . . [She  
draws a few deep breaths behind  
him.]

SHANNON:

Put some hemlock in his poppy-seed  
tea tonight so he won't wake up  
tomorrow for the removal to the Casa



de Huéspedes. Do that act of mercy.

Put in the hemlock and I will  
consecrate it, turn it to God's  
blood. Hell, if you'll get me out of  
this hammock I'll serve it to him  
myself, I'll be your accomplice in  
this act of mercy. I'll say, "Take  
and drink this, the blood of our—"

HANNAH:

Stop it! Stop being childishly  
cruel! I can't stand for a person  
that I respect to talk and behave  
like a small, cruel boy, Mr.

Shannon.

SHANNON:

What've you found to respect in me,  
Miss . . . Thin-Standing-Up-Female-  
Buddha?

HANNAH:

I respect a person that has had to  
fight and howl for his decency and  
his—

SHANNON:

What decency?

HANNAH:

Yes, for his decency and his bit of  
goodness, much more than I respect

the lucky ones that just had theirs  
handed out to them at birth and  
never afterward snatched away from  
them by . . . unbearable . . .  
torments, I. . . .

SHANNON:

You respect me?

HANNAH:

I do.

SHANNON:

But you just said that I'm taking  
pleasure in a . . . voluptuous  
crucifixion without nails. A . . .  
what? . . . painless atonement for  
the—

HANNAH [cutting in]:

Yes, but I think—

SHANNON:

Untie me!

HANNAH:

Soon, soon. Be patient.

SHANNON:

Now!

HANNAH:

Not quite yet, Mr. Shannon. Not till  
I'm reasonably sure that you won't  
swim out to China, because, you see,

I think you think of the . . . "the long swim to China" as another painless atonement. I mean I don't think you think you'd be intercepted by sharks and barracudas before you got far past the barrier reef. And I'm afraid you would be. It's as simple as that, if that is simple.

SHANNON:

What's simple?

HANNAH:

Nothing, except for simpletons, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

Do you believe in people being tied up?

HANNAH:

Only when they might take the long swim to China.

SHANNON:

All right, Miss Thin-Standing-Up-Female-Buddha, just light a Benson and Hedges cigarette for me and put it in my mouth and take it out when you hear me choking on it—if that doesn't seem to you like another bit of voluptuous self-crucifixion.

HANNAH [looking about the  
verandah]:

I will, but . . . where did I put  
them?

SHANNON:

I have a pack of my own in my  
pocket.

HANNAH:

Which pocket?

SHANNON:

I don't know which pocket, you'll  
have to frisk me for it. [She pats  
his jacket pocket.]

HANNAH:

They're not in your coat pocket.

SHANNON:

Then look for them in my pants'  
pockets.

[She hesitates to put her hand in his pants' pockets, for a moment. Hannah has always had a sort of fastidiousness, a reluctance, toward intimate physical contact. But after the momentary fastidious hesitation, she puts her hands in his pants' pocket and draws out the cigarette pack.]

SHANNON:

Now light it for me and put it in my  
mouth.

[She complies with these directions. Almost at once he

chokes and the cigarette is expelled.]

HANNAH:

You've dropped it on you—where is  
it?

SHANNON [twisting and lunging about  
in the hammock]:

It's under me, under me, burning.  
Untie me, for God's sake, will you—  
it's burning me through my pants!

HANNAH:

Raise your hips so I can—

SHANNON:

I can't, the ropes are too tight.  
Untie me, untieeeee meeeeeee!

HANNAH:

I've found it, I've got it!

[But Shannon's shout has brought Maxine out of her office.  
She rushes onto the verandah and sits on Shannon's legs.]

MAXINE:

Now hear this, you crazy black Irish  
mick, you! You Protestant black  
Irish looney, I've called up Lopez,  
Doc Lopez. Remember him—the man in  
the dirty white jacket that come  
here the last time you cracked up  
here? And hauled you off to the Casa  
de Locos? Where they threw you into

that cell with nothing in it but a bucket and straw and a water pipe? That you crawled up the water pipe? And dropped head-down on the floor and got a concussion? Yeah, and I told him you were back here to crack up again and if you didn't quiet down here tonight you should be hauled out in the morning.

SHANNON [cutting in, with the honking sound of a panicky goose]:

Off, off, off, off, off!

HANNAH:

Oh, Mrs. Faulk, Mr. Shannon won't quiet down till he's left alone in the hammock.

MAXINE:

Then why don't you leave him alone?

HANNAH:

I'm not sitting on him and he . . . has to be cared for by someone.

MAXINE:

And the someone is you?

HANNAH:

A long time ago, Mrs. Faulk, I had experience with someone in Mr. Shannon's condition, so I know how

necessary it is to let them be quiet  
for a while.

MAXINE:

He wasn't quiet, he was shouting.

HANNAH:

He will quiet down again. I'm  
preparing a sedative tea for him,  
Mrs. Faulk.

MAXINE:

Yeah, I see. Put it out. Nobody  
cooks here but the Chinaman in the  
kitchen.

HANNAH:

This is just a little alcohol  
burner, a spirit lamp, Mrs. Faulk.

MAXINE:

I know what it is. It goes out!

[She blows out the flame under the burner.]

SHANNON:

Maxine honey? [He speaks quietly  
now.] Stop persecuting this lady.  
You can't intimidate her. A bitch is  
no match for a lady except in a  
brass bed, honey, and sometimes not  
even there.

[The Germans are heard shouting for beer—a case of it to  
take down to the beach.]

WOLFGANG:

Eine Kiste Carta Blanca.

FRAU FAHRENKOPF:

Wir haben genug gehabt . . .  
vielleicht nicht.

HERR FAHRENKOPF:

Nein! Niemals genug.

HILDA:

Mutter du bist dick . . . aber wir  
sind es nicht.

SHANNON:

Maxine, you're neglecting your  
duties as a beerhall waitress. [His  
tone is deceptively gentle.] They  
want a case of Carta Blanca to carry  
down to the beach, so give it to 'em  
. . . and tonight, when the moon's  
gone down, if you'll let me out of  
this hammock, I'll try to imagine  
you as a . . . as a nymph in her  
teens.

MAXINE:

A fat lot of good you'd be in your  
present condition.

SHANNON:

Don't be a sexual snob at your age,  
honey.



MAXINE:

Hah! [But the unflattering offer has pleased her realistically modest soul, so she goes back to the Germans.]

SHANNON:

Now let me try a bit of your poppyseed tea, Miss Jelkes.

HANNAH:

I ran out of sugar, but I had some ginger, some sugared ginger. [She pours a cup of tea and sips it.] Oh, it's not well brewed yet, but try to drink some now and the—[She lights the burner again.]—the second cup will be better.

[She crouches by the hammock and presses the cup to his lips. He raises his head to sip it, but he gags and chokes.]

SHANNON:

Caesar's ghost!—it could be chased by the witches' brew from Macbeth.

HANNAH:

Yes, I know, it's still bitter.

[The Germans appear on the wing of the verandah and go trooping down to the beach, for a beer festival and a moonlight swim. Even in the relative dark they have a luminous color, an almost phosphorescent pink and gold color of skin. They carry with them a case of Carta Blanca beer and the fantastically painted rubber horse. On their

faces are smiles of euphoria as they move like a dream-image, starting to sing a marching song as they go.]

SHANNON:

Fiends out of hell with the . . .  
voices of . . . angels.

HANNAH:

Yes, they call it "the logic of  
contradictions," Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON [lunging suddenly forward  
and undoing the loosened ropes]:

Out! Free! Unassisted!

HANNAH:

Yes, I never doubted that you could  
get loose, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

Thanks for your help, anyhow.

HANNAH:

Where are you going? [He has crossed  
to the liquor cart.]

SHANNON:

Not far. To the liquor cart to make  
myself a rum-coco.

HANNAH:

Oh. . . .

SHANNON [at the liquor cart]:

Coconut? Check. Machete? Check. Rum?  
Double check! Ice? The ice-bucket's  
empty. O.K., it's a night for warm

drinks. Miss Jelkes? Would you care to have your complimentary rum-coco?

HANNAH:

No thank you, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

You don't mind me having mine?

HANNAH:

Not at all, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

You don't disapprove of this weakness, this self-indulgence?

HANNAH:

Liquor isn't your problem, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

What is my problem, Mr. Jelkes?

HANNAH:

The oldest one in the world—the need to believe in something or in someone—almost anyone—almost anything . . . something.

SHANNON:

Your voice sounds hopeless about it.

HANNAH:

No, I'm not hopeless about it. In fact, I've discovered something to believe in.

SHANNON:

Something like . . . God?

HANNAH:

No.

SHANNON:

What?

HANNAH:

Broken gates between people so they  
can reach each other, even if it's  
just for one night only.

SHANNON:

One night stands, huh?

HANNAH:

One night . . . communication  
between them on a verandah outside  
their . . . separate cubicles, Mr.  
Shannon.

SHANNON:

You don't mean physically, do you?

HANNAH:

No.

SHANNON:

I didn't think so. Then what?

HANNAH:

A little understanding exchanged  
between them, a wanting to help each  
other through nights like this.

SHANNON:

Who was the someone you told the widow you'd helped long ago to get through a crack-up like this one I'm going through?

HANNAH:

Oh . . . that. Myself.

SHANNON:

You?

HANNAH:

Yes. I can help you because I've been through what you are going through now. I had something like your spook—I just had a different name for him. I called him the blue devil, and . . . oh . . . we had quite a battle, quite a contest between us.

SHANNON:

Which you obviously won.

HANNAH:

I couldn't afford to lose.

SHANNON:

How'd you beat your blue devil?

HANNAH:

I showed him that I could endure him and I made him respect my endurance.

SHANNON:

How?

HANNAH:

Just by, just by . . . enduring.  
Endurance is something that spooks  
and blue devils respect. And they  
respect all the tricks that panicky  
people use to outlast and outwit  
their panic.

SHANNON:

Like poppy-seed tea?

HANNAH:

Poppy-seed tea or rum-cocos or just  
a few deep breaths. Anything,  
everything, that we take to give  
them the slip, and so to keep on  
going.

SHANNON:

To where?

HANNAH:

To somewhere like this, perhaps.  
This verandah over the rain forest  
and the still-water beach, after  
long, difficult travels. And I don't  
mean just travels about the world,  
the earth's surface. I mean . . .  
subterranean travels, the . . . the

journeys that the spooked and  
bedeviled people are forced to take  
through the . . . the unlighted  
sides of their natures.

SHANNON:

Don't tell me you have a dark side  
to your nature. [He says this  
sardonically.]

HANNAH:

I'm sure I don't have to tell a man  
as experienced and knowledgeable as  
you, Mr. Shannon, that everything  
has its shadowy side?

[She glances up at him and observes that she doesn't have his attention. He is gazing tensely at something off the verandah. It is the kind of abstraction, not vague but fiercely concentrated, that occurs in madness. She turns to look where he's looking. She closes her eyes for a moment and draws a deep breath, then goes on speaking in a voice like a hypnotist's, as if the words didn't matter, since he is not listening to her so much as to the tone and the cadence of her voice.]

HANNAH:

Everything in the whole solar system  
has a shadowy side to it except the  
sun itself—the sun is the single  
exception. You're not listening, are  
you?

SHANNON [as if replying to her]:

The spook is in the rain forest. [He  
suddenly hurls his coconut shell

with great violence off the verandah, creating a commotion among the jungle birds.] Good shot—it caught him right on the kisser and his teeth flew out like popcorn from a popper.

HANNAH:

Has he gone off—to the dentist?

SHANNON:

He's retreated a little way away for a little while, but when I buzz for my breakfast tomorrow, he'll bring it in to me with a grin that'll curdle the milk in the coffee and he'll stink like a . . . a gringo drunk in a Mexican jail who's slept all night in his vomit.

HANNAH:

If you wake up before I'm out, I'll bring your coffee in to you . . . if you call me.

SHANNON [His attention returns to her]:

No, you'll be gone, God help me.

HANNAH:

Maybe and maybe not. I might think of something tomorrow to placate the



widow.

SHANNON:

The widow's implacable, honey.

HANNAH:

I think I'll think of something because I have to. I can't let Nonno be moved to the Casa de Huéspedes, Mr. Shannon. Not any more than I could let you take the long swim out to China. You know that. Not if I can prevent it, and when I have to be resourceful, I can be very resourceful.

SHANNON:

How'd you get over your crack-up?

HANNAH:

I never cracked up, I couldn't afford to. Of course, I nearly did once. I was young once, Mr. Shannon, but I was one of those people who can be young without really having their youth, and not to have your youth when you are young is naturally very disturbing. But I was lucky. My work, this occupational therapy that I gave myself—painting and doing quick character sketches—

made me look out of myself, not in,  
and gradually, at the far end of the  
tunnel that I was struggling out of  
I began to see this faint, very  
faint gray light—the light of the  
world outside me—and I kept climbing  
toward it. I had to.

SHANNON:

Did it stay a gray light?

HANNAH:

No, no, it turned white.

SHANNON:

Only white, never gold?

HANNAH:

No, it stayed only white, but white  
is a very good light to see at the  
end of a long black tunnel you  
thought would be never-ending, that  
only God or Death could put a stop  
to, especially when you . . . since  
I was . . . far from sure about God.

SHANNON:

You're still unsure about him?

HANNAH:

Not as unsure as I was. You see, in  
my profession I have to look hard  
and close at human faces in order to

catch something in them before they get restless and call out, "Waiter, the check, we're leaving." Of course sometimes, a few times, I just see blobs of wet dough that pass for human faces, with bits of jelly for eyes. Then I cue in Nonno to give a recitation, because I can't draw such faces. But those aren't the usual faces, I don't think they're even real. Most times I do see something, and I can catch it—I can, like I caught something in your face when I sketched you this afternoon with your eyes open. Are you still listening to me? [He crouches beside her chair, looking up at her intently.] In Shanghai, Shannon, there is a place that's called the House for the Dying—the old and penniless dying, whose younger, penniless living children and grandchildren take them there for them to get through with their dying on pallets, on straw mats. The first time I went there it shocked me, I ran away from it. But I came back

later and I saw that their children and grandchildren and the custodians of the place had put little comforts beside their death-pallets, little flowers and opium candies and religious emblems. That made me able to stay to draw their dying faces. Sometimes only their eyes were still alive, but, Mr. Shannon, those eyes of the penniless dying with those last little comforts beside them, I tell you, Mr. Shannon, those eyes looked up with their last dim life left in them as clear as the stars in the Southern Cross, Mr. Shannon. And now . . . now I am going to say something to you that will sound like something that only the spinster granddaughter of a minor romantic poet is likely to say. . . . Nothing I've ever seen has seemed as beautiful to me, not even the view from this verandah between the sky and the still-water beach, and lately . . . lately my grandfather's eyes have looked up at me like that. . . . [She rises abruptly and

crosses to the front of the verandah.] Tell me, what is that sound I keep hearing down there?

SHANNON:

There's a marimba band at the cantina on the beach.

HANNAH:

I don't mean that, I mean that scraping, scuffling sound that I keep hearing under the verandah.

SHANNON:

Oh, that. The Mexican boys that work here have caught an iguana and tied it up under the verandah, hitched it to a post, and naturally of course it's trying to scramble away. But it's got to the end of its rope, and get any further it cannot. Ha-ha—that's it. [He quotes from Nonno's poem: "And still the orange," etc.] Do you have any life of your own—besides your water colors and sketches and your travels with Grampa?

HANNAH:

We make a home for each other, my grandfather and I. Do you know what

I mean by a home? I don't mean a regular home. I mean I don't mean what other people mean when they speak of a home, because I don't regard a home as a . . . well, as a place, a building . . . a house . . . of wood, bricks, stone. I think of a home as being a thing that two people have between them in which each can . . . well, nest-rest-live in, emotionally speaking. Does that make any sense to you, Mr. Shannon?

SHANNON:

Yeah, complete. But. . . .

HANNAH:

Another incomplete sentence.

SHANNON:

We better leave it that way. I might've said something to hurt you.

HANNAH:

I'm not thin skinned, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

No, well, then, I'll say it. . . .  
[He moves to the liquor cart.] When a bird builds a nest to rest in and live in, it doesn't build it in a . . . a falling-down tree.

HANNAH:

I'm not a bird, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

I was making an analogy, Miss  
Jelkes.

HANNAH:

I thought you were making yourself  
another rum-coco, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

Both. When a bird builds a nest, it  
builds it with an eye for the . . .  
the relative permanence of the  
location, and also for the purpose  
of mating and propagating its  
species.

HANNAH:

I still say that I'm not a bird, Mr.  
Shannon, I'm a human being and when  
a member of that fantastic species  
builds a nest in the heart of  
another, the question of permanence  
isn't the first or even the last  
thing that's considered . . .  
necessarily? . . . always? Nonno and  
I have been continually reminded of  
the impermanence of things lately.  
We go back to a hotel where we've

been many times before and it isn't there any more. It's been demolished and there's one of those glassy, brassy new ones. Or if the old one's still there, the manager or the maitre d' who always welcomed us back so cordially before has been replaced by someone new who looks at us with suspicion.

SHANNON:

Yeah, but you still had each other.

HANNAH:

Yes. We did.

SHANNON:

But when the old gentleman goes?

HANNAH:

Yes?

SHANNON:

What will you do? Stop?

HANNAH:

Stop or go on . . . probably go on.

SHANNON:

Alone? Checking into hotels alone, eating alone at tables for one in a corner, the tables waiters call aces.

HANNAH:



Thank you for your sympathy, Mr. Shannon, but in my profession I'm obliged to make quick contacts with strangers who turn to friends very quickly.

SHANNON:

Customers aren't friends.

HANNAH:

They turn to friends, if they're friendly.

SHANNON:

Yeah, but how will it seem to be traveling alone after so many years of traveling with. . . .

HANNAH:

I will know how it feels when I feel it—and don't say alone as if nobody had ever gone on alone. For instance, you.

SHANNON:

I've always traveled with trainloads, planeloads and busloads of tourists.

HANNAH:

That doesn't mean you're still not really alone.

SHANNON:

I never fail to make an intimate connection with someone in my parties.

HANNAH:

Yes, the youngest young lady, and I was on the verandah this afternoon when the latest of these young ladies gave a demonstration of how lonely the intimate connection has always been for you. The episode in the cold, inhuman hotel room, Mr. Shannon, for which you despise the lady almost as much as you despise yourself. Afterward you are so polite to the lady that I'm sure it must chill her to the bone, the scrupulous little attentions that you pay her in return for your little enjoyment of her. The gentleman-of-Virginia act that you put on for her, your noblesse oblige treatment of her . . . Oh no, Mr. Shannon, don't kid yourself that you ever travel with someone. You have always traveled alone except for your spook, as you call it. He's your traveling companion. Nothing,

nobody else has traveled with you.

SHANNON:

Thank you for your sympathy, Miss  
Jelkes.

HANNAH:

You're welcome, Mr. Shannon. And now  
I think I had better warm up the  
poppy-seed tea for Nonno. Only a  
good night's sleep could make it  
possible for him to go on from here  
tomorrow.

SHANNON:

Yes, well, if the conversation is  
over—I think I'll go down for a swim  
now.

HANNAH:

To China?

SHANNON:

No, not to China, just to the little  
island out here with the sleepy bar  
on it . . . called the Cantina  
Serena.

HANNAH:

Why?

SHANNON:

Because I'm not a nice drunk and I  
was about to ask you a not nice

question.

HANNAH:

Ask it. There's no set limit on  
questions here tonight.

SHANNON:

And no set limit on answers?

HANNAH:

None I can think of between you and  
me, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

That I will take you up on.

HANNAH:

Do.

SHANNON:

It's a bargain.

HANNAH:

Only do lie back down in the hammock  
and drink a full cup of the poppyseed  
tea this time. It's warmer now  
and the sugared ginger will make it  
easier to get down.

SHANNON:

All right. The question is this:  
have you never had in your life any  
kind of a lovelife? [Hannah stiffens  
for a moment.] I thought you said  
there was no limit set on questions.

HANNAH:

We'll make a bargain—I will answer your question after you've had a full cup of the poppy-seed tea so you'll be able to get the good night's sleep you need, too. It's fairly warm now and the sugared ginger's made it much more—[She sips the cup.]—palatable.

SHANNON:

You think I'm going to drift into dreamland so you can welch on the bargain? [He accepts the cup from her.]

HANNAH:

I'm not a welcher on bargains. Drink it all. All. All!

SHANNON [with a disgusted grimace as he drains the cup]:

Great Caesar's ghost. [He tosses the cup off the verandah and falls into the hammock, chuckling.] The Oriental idea of a Mickey Finn, huh? Sit down where I can see you, Miss Jelkes honey. [She sits down in a straight-back chair, some distance from the hammock.] Where I can see

you! I don't have an X-ray eye in the back of my head, Miss Jelkes. [She moves the chair alongside the hammock.] Further, further, up further. [She complies.] There now. Answer the question now, Miss Jelkes honey.

HANNAH:

Would you mind repeating the question.

SHANNON [slowly, with emphasis]:  
Have you never had in all of your life and your travels any experience, any encounter, with what Larry-the-crackpot Shannon thinks of as a lovelife?

HANNAH:

There are . . . worse things than chastity, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:

Yeah, lunacy and death are both a little worse, maybe! But chastity isn't a thing that a beautiful woman or an attractive man falls into like a booby trap or an overgrown gopher hole, is it? [There is a pause.] I still think you are welching on the

bargain and I. . . . [He starts out  
of the hammock]

HANNAH:

Mr. Shannon, this night is just as  
hard for me to get through as it is  
for you to get through. But it's you  
that are welching on the bargain,  
you're not staying in the hammock.  
Lie back down in the hammock. Now.

Yes. Yes, I have had two  
experiences, well, encounters, with.

. . .

SHANNON:

Two, did you say?

HANNAH:

Yes, I said two. And I wasn't  
exaggerating and don't you say  
"fantastic" before I've told you  
both stories. When I was sixteen,  
your favorite age, Mr. Shannon, each  
Saturday afternoon my grandfather  
Nonno would give me thirty cents, my  
allowance, my pay for my secretarial  
and housekeeping duties. Twenty-five  
cents for admission to the Saturday  
matinee at the Nantucket movie

theatre and five cents extra for a bag of popcorn, Mr. Shannon. I'd sit at the almost empty back of the movie theatre so that the popcorn munching wouldn't disturb the other movie patrons. Well . . . one afternoon a young man sat down beside me and pushed his . . . knee against mine and . . . I moved over two seats but he moved over beside me and continued this . . . pressure! I jumped up and screamed, Mr. Shannon. He was arrested for molesting a minor.

SHANNON:

Is he still in the Nantucket jail?

HANNAH:

No. I got him out. I told the police that it was a Clara Bow picture—it was a Clara Bow picture—and I was just overexcited.

SHANNON:

Fantastic.

HANNAH:

Yes, very! The second experience is much more recent, only two years ago, when Nonno and I were operating



at the Raffles Hotel in Singapore,  
and doing very well there, making  
expenses and more. One evening in  
the Palm Court of the Raffles we met  
this middle-aged, sort of  
nondescript Australian salesman. You  
know—plump, bald-spotted, with a bad  
attempt at speaking with an upperclass  
accent and terribly  
overfriendly. He was alone and  
looked lonely. Grandfather said him  
a poem and I did a quick character  
sketch that was shamelessly  
flattering of him. He paid me more  
than my usual asking price and gave  
my grandfather five Malayan dollars,  
yes, and he even purchased one of my  
water colors. Then it was Nonno's  
bedtime. The Aussie salesman asked  
me out in a sampan with him. Well,  
he'd been so generous . . . I  
accepted. I did, I accepted.  
Grandfather went up to bed and I  
went out in the sampan with this  
ladies' underwear salesman. I  
noticed that he became more and  
more. . . .

SHANNON:

What?

HANNAH:

Well . . . agitated . . . as the  
afterglow of the sunset faded out on  
the water. [She laughs with a  
delicate sadness.] Well, finally,  
eventually, he leaned toward me . .  
. we were vis-à-vis in the sampan .  
. . and he looked intensely,  
passionately into my eyes. [She  
laughs again.] And he said to me:  
"Miss Jelkes? Will you do me a  
favor? Will you do something for  
me?" "What?" said I. "Well," said  
he, "if I turn my back, if I look  
the other way, will you take off  
some piece of your clothes and let  
me hold it, just hold it?"

SHANNON:

Fantastic!

HANNAH:

Then he said, "It will just take a  
few seconds." "Just a few seconds  
for what?" I asked him. [She gives  
the same laugh again.] He didn't say  
for what, but. . . .

SHANNON:

His satisfaction?

HANNAH:

Yes.

SHANNON:

What did you do—in a situation like  
that?

HANNAH:

I . . . gratified his request, I  
did! And he kept his promise. He did  
keep his back turned till I said  
ready and threw him . . . the part  
of my clothes.

SHANNON: What did he do with it?

HANNAH:

He didn't move, except to seize the  
article he'd requested. I looked the  
other way while his satisfaction  
took place.

SHANNON:

Watch out for commercial travelers  
in the Far East. Is that the moral,  
Miss Jelkes honey?

HANNAH:

Oh, no, the moral is Oriental.  
Accept whatever situation you cannot  
improve.

SHANNON:

"When it's inevitable, lean back and  
enjoy it—is that it?"

HANNAH:

He'd bought a water color. The incident was embarrassing, not violent. I left and returned unmolested. Oh, and the funniest part of all is that when we got back to the Raffles Hotel, he took the piece of apparel out of his pocket like a bashful boy producing an apple for his schoolteacher and tried to slip it into my hand in the elevator. I wouldn't accept it. I whispered, "Oh, please keep it, Mr. Willoughby!" He'd paid the asking price for my water color and somehow the little experience had been rather touching, I mean it was so lonely, out there in the sampan with violet streaks in the sky and this little middle-aged Australian making sounds like he was dying of asthma! And the planet Venus coming serenely out of a fair-weather cloud, over the Strait of Malacca. . . .

SHANNON:

And that experience . . . you call  
that a . . . .

HANNAH:

A love experience? Yes. I do call it  
one.

[He regards her with incredulity, peering into her face so  
closely that she is embarrassed and becomes defensive.]

SHANNON:

That, that . . . sad, dirty little  
episode, you call it a . . . ?

HANNAH [cutting in sharply]:

Sad it certainly was—for the odd  
little man—but why do you call it  
“dirty”?

SHANNON:

How did you feel when you went into  
your bedroom?

HANNAH:

Confused, I . . . a little confused,  
I suppose. . . . I'd known about  
loneliness—but not that degree or .  
. . depth of it.

SHANNON:

You mean it didn't disgust you?

HANNAH:

Nothing human disgusts me unless

it's unkind, violent. And I told you  
how gentle he was—apologetic, shy,  
and really very, well, delicate  
about it. However, I do grant you it  
was on the rather fantastic level.

SHANNON:

You're . . .

HANNAH:

I am what? "Fantastic"?

[While they have been talking, Nonno's voice has been heard  
now and then, mumbling, from his cubicle. Suddenly it  
becomes loud and clear.]

NONNO:

And finally the broken stem,  
The plummeting to earth and then. .

. .

[His voice subsides to its mumble. Shannon, standing behind  
Hannah, places his hand on her throat.]

HANNAH:

What is that for? Are you about to  
strangle me, Mr. Shannon?

SHANNON:

You can't stand to be touched?

HANNAH:

Save it for the widow. It isn't for  
me.

SHANNON:

Yes, you're right. [He removes his

hand.] I could do it with Mrs. Faulk, the inconsolable widow, but I couldn't with you.

HANNAH [dryly and lightly]:  
Spinster's loss, widow's gain, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON:  
Or widow's loss, spinster's gain. Anyhow it sounds like some old parlor game in a Virginia or Nantucket Island parlor. But . . . I wonder something. . . .

HANNAH:  
What do you wonder?

SHANNON:  
If we couldn't . . . travel together, I mean just travel together?

HANNAH:  
Could we? In your opinion?

SHANNON:  
Why not, I don't see why not.

HANNAH:  
I think the impracticality of the idea will appear much clearer to you in the morning, Mr. Shannon. [She folds her dimly gold-lacquered fan

and rises from her chair.] Morning can always be counted on to bring us back to a more realistic level. . . . Good night, Mr. Shannon. I have to pack before I'm too tired to.

SHANNON:

Don't leave me out here alone yet.

HANNAH:

I have to pack now so I can get up at daybreak and try my luck in the plaza.

SHANNON:

You won't sell a water color or sketch in that blazing hot plaza tomorrow. Miss Jelkes honey, I don't think you're operating on the realistic level.

HANNAH:

Would I be if I thought we could travel together?

SHANNON:

I still don't see why we couldn't.

HANNAH:

Mr. Shannon, you're not well enough to travel anywhere with anybody right now. Does that sound cruel of me?



SHANNON:

You mean that I'm stuck here for  
good? Winding up with the . . .  
inconsolable widow?

HANNAH:

We all wind up with something or  
with someone, and if it's someone  
instead of just something, we're  
lucky, perhaps . . . unusually  
lucky. [She starts to enter her  
cubicle, then turns to him again in  
the doorway.] Oh, and tomorrow. . .  
. [She touches her forehead as if a  
little confused as well as  
exhausted.]

SHANNON:

What about tomorrow?

HANNAH [with difficulty]:

I think it might be better,  
tomorrow, if we avoid showing any  
particular interest in each other,  
because Mrs. Faulk is a morbidly  
jealous woman.

SHANNON:

Is she?

HANNAH:

Yes, she seems to have misunderstood

our . . . sympathetic interest in each other. So I think we'd better avoid any more long talks on the verandah. I mean till she's thoroughly reassured it might be better if we just say good morning or good night to each other.

SHANNON:

We don't even have to say that.

HANNAH:

I will, but you don't have to answer.

SHANNON [savagely]:

How about wall-tappings between us by way of communication? You know, like convicts in separate cells communicate with each other by tapping on the walls of the cells? One tap: I'm here. Two taps: are you there? Three taps: yes, I am. Four taps: that's good, we're together. Christ! . . . Here, take this. [He snatches the gold cross from his pocket.] Take my gold cross and hock it, it's 22-carat gold.

HANNAH:

What do you, what are you . . . ?

SHANNON:

There's a fine amethyst in it, it'll  
pay your travel expenses back to the  
States.

HANNAH:

Mr. Shannon, you're making no sense  
at all now.

SHANNON:

Neither are you, Miss Jelkes,  
talking about tomorrow, and. . . .

HANNAH:

All I was saying was. . . .

SHANNON:

You won't be here tomorrow! Had you  
forgotten you won't be here  
tomorrow?

HANNAH [with a slight, shocked  
laugh]:

Yes, I had, I'd forgotten!

SHANNON:

The widow wants you out and out  
you'll go, even if you sell your  
water colors like hotcakes to the  
pariah dogs in the plaza. [He stares  
at her, shaking his head  
hopelessly.]

HANNAH:

I suppose you're right, Mr. Shannon.  
I must be too tired to think or I've  
contracted your fever. . . . It had  
actually slipped my mind for a  
moment that—

NONNO [abruptly, from his cubicle]:

Hannah!

HANNAH [rushing to his door]:

Yes, what is it, Nonno? [He doesn't  
hear her and repeats her name  
louder.] Here I am, I'm here.

NONNO:

Don't come in yet, but stay where I  
can call you.

HANNAH:

Yes, I'll hear you, Nonno. [She  
turns toward Shannon, drawing a deep  
breath.]

SHANNON:

Listen, if you don't take this gold  
cross that I never want on me again,  
I'm going to pitch it off the  
verandah at the spook in the rain  
forest. [He raises an arm to throw  
it, but she catches his arm to  
restrain him.]

HANNAH:

All right, Mr. Shannon, I'll take  
it, I'll hold it for you.

SHANNON:

Hock it, honey, you've got to.

HANNAH:

Well, if I do, I'll mail the pawn  
ticket to you so you can redeem it,  
because you'll want it again, when  
you've gotten over your fever. [She  
moves blindly down the verandah and  
starts to enter the wrong cubicle.]

SHANNON:

That isn't your cell, you went past  
it. [His voice is gentle again.]

HANNAH:

I did, I'm sorry. I've never been  
this tired in all my life. [She  
turns to face him again. He stares  
into her face. She looks blindly  
out, past him.] Never! [There is a  
slight pause.] What did you say is  
making that constant, dry, scuffling  
sound beneath the verandah?

SHANNON:

I told you.

HANNAH:

I didn't hear you.

SHANNON:

I'll get my flashlight, I'll show  
you. [He lurches rapidly into his  
cubicle and back out with a  
flashlight.] It's an iguana. I'll  
show you. . . . See? The iguana? At  
the end of its rope? Trying to go on  
past the end of its goddam rope?  
Like you! Like me! Like Grampa with  
his last poem!

[In the pause which follows singing is heard from the  
beach.]

HANNAH:

What is a-what-iguana?

SHANNON:

It's a kind of lizard—a big one, a  
giant one. The Mexican kids caught  
it and tied it up.

HANNAH:

Why did they tie it up?

SHANNON:

Because that's what they do. They  
tie them up and fatten them up and  
then eat them up, when they're ready  
for eating. They're a delicacy.  
Taste like white meat of chicken. At  
least the Mexicans think so. And

also the kids, the Mexican kids,  
have a lot of fun with them, poking  
out their eyes with sticks and  
burning their tails with matches.

You know? Fun? Like that?

HANNAH:

Mr. Shannon, please go down and cut  
it loose!

SHANNON:

I can't do that.

HANNAH:

Why can't you?

SHANNON:

Mrs. Faulk wants to eat it. I've got  
to please Mrs. Faulk, I am at her  
mercy. I am at her disposal.

HANNAH:

I don't understand. I mean I don't  
understand how anyone could eat a  
big lizard.

SHANNON:

Don't be so critical. If you got  
hungry enough you'd eat it too.  
You'd be surprised what people will  
eat if hungry. There's a lot of  
hungry people still in the world.  
Many have died of starvation, but a

lot are still living and hungry,  
believe you me, if you will take my  
word for it. Why, when I was  
conducting a party of—ladies?—yes,  
ladies . . . through a country that  
shall be nameless but in this world,  
we were passing by rubberneck bus  
along a tropical coast when we saw a  
great mound of . . . well, the smell  
was unpleasant. One of my ladies  
said, "Oh, Larry, what is that?" My  
name being Lawrence, the most  
familiar ladies sometimes call me  
Larry. I didn't use the four letter  
word for what the great mound was. I  
didn't think it was necessary to say  
it. Then she noticed, and I noticed  
too, a pair of very old natives of  
this nameless country, practically  
naked except for a few filthy rags,  
creeping and crawling about this  
mound of . . . and . . .  
occasionally stopping to pick  
something out of it, and pop it into  
their mouths. What? Bits of  
undigested . . . food particles,  
Miss Jelkes. [There is silence for a



moment. She makes a gagging sound in her throat and rushes the length of the verandah to the wooden steps and disappears for a while. Shannon continues, to himself and the moon.] Now why did I tell her that? Because it's true? That's no reason to tell her, because it's true. Yeah. Because it's true was a good reason not to tell her. Except . . . I think I first faced it in that nameless country. The gradual, rapid, natural, unnatural—predestined, accidental—cracking up and going to pieces of young Mr. T. Lawrence Shannon, yes, still young Mr. T. Lawrence Shannon, by which rapid-slow process . . . his final tour of ladies through tropical countries. . . . Why did I say "tropical"? Hell! Yes! It's always been tropical countries I took ladies through. Does that, does that—huh?—signify something, I wonder? Maybe. Fast decay is a thing of hot climates, steamy, hot, wet climates, and I run back to them like a . . .

Incomplete sentence. . . . Always seducing a lady or two, or three or four or five ladies in the party, but really ravaging her first by pointing out to her the-what?- horrors? Yes, horrors!-of the tropical country being conducted a tour through. My . . . brain's going out now, like a failing-power. . . . So I stay here, I reckon, and live off la patrona for the rest of my life. Well, she's old enough to predecease me. She could check out of here first, and I imagine that after a couple of years of having to satisfy her I might be prepared for the shock of her passing on. . . . Cruelty . . . pity. What is it? . . . . Don't know, all I know is. . . .

HANNAH: [from below the verandah]:

You're talking to yourself.

SHANNON:

No. To you. I knew you could hear me out there, but not being able to see you I could say it easier, you know

. . . ?

NONNO:

A chronicle no longer gold,  
A bargaining with mist and mould. .

. .

HANNAH [coming back onto the  
verandah]:

I took a closer look at the iguana  
down there.

SHANNON:

You did? How did you like it?

Charming? Attractive?

HANNAH:

No, it's not an attractive creature.  
Nevertheless I think it should be  
cut loose.

SHANNON:

Iguanas have been known to bite  
their tails off when they're tied up  
by their tails.

HANNAH:

This one is tied by its throat. It  
can't bite its own head off to  
escape from the end of the rope, Mr.  
Shannon. Can you look at me and tell  
me truthfully that you don't know  
it's able to feel pain and panic?

SHANNON:

You mean it's one of God's

creatures?

HANNAH:

If you want to put it that way, yes,  
it is. Mr. Shannon, will you please  
cut it loose, set it free? Because  
if you don't, I will.

SHANNON:

Can you look at me and tell me  
truthfully that this reptilian  
creature, tied up down there,  
doesn't mostly disturb you because  
of its parallel situation to your  
Grampa's dying-out effort to finish  
one last poem, Miss Jelkes?

HANNAH:

Yes, I. . . .

SHANNON:

Never mind completing that sentence.  
We'll play God tonight like kids  
play house with old broken crates  
and boxes. All right? Now Shannon is  
going to go down there with his  
machete and cut the damn lizard  
loose so it can run back to its  
bushes because God won't do it and  
we are going to play God here.

HANNAH:

I knew you'd do that. And I thank  
you.

[Shannon goes down the two steps from the verandah with the machete. He crouches beside the cactus that hides the iguana and cuts the rope with a quick, hard stroke of the machete.

He turns to look after its flight, as the low, excited mumble in cubicle 3 grows louder. Then Nonno's voice turns to a sudden shout.]

NONNO:

Hannah! Hannah! [She rushes  
to him, as he wheels himself out of  
his cubicle onto the verandah.]

HANNAH:

Grandfather! What is it?

NONNO:

I! believe! it! is! finished! Quick,  
before I forget it—pencil, paper!

Quick! please! Ready?

HANNAH:

Yes. All ready, Grandfather.

NONNO [in a loud, exalted voice]:

How calmly does the orange branch

Observe the sky begin to blanch

Without a cry, without a prayer,

With no betrayal of despair.

Sometime while night obscures the

tree

The zenith of its life will be

Gone past forever, and from thence

A second history will commence.

A chronicle no longer gold  
A bargaining with mist and mould,  
And finally the broken stem  
The plummeting to earth; and then  
An intercourse not well designed  
For beings of a golden kind  
Whose native green must arch above  
The earth's obscene, corrupting  
love.

And still the ripe fruit and the  
branch

Observe the sky begin to blanch  
Without a cry, without a prayer,  
With no betrayal of despair.

O Courage, could you not as well  
Select a second place to dwell,  
Not only in that golden tree  
But in the frightened heart of me?

Have you got it?

HANNAH:

Yes!

NONNO:

All of it?

HANNAH:

Every word of it.

NONNO:

It is finished?

HANNAH:

Yes.

NONNO:

Oh! God! Finally finished?

HANNAH:

Yes, finally finished. [She is crying. The singing voices flow up from the beach.]

NONNO:

After waiting so long!

HANNAH:

Yes, we waited so long.

NONNO:

And it's good! It is good?

HANNAH:

It's—it's. . . .

NONNO:

What?

HANNAH:

Beautiful, Grandfather! [She springs up, a fist to her mouth.] Oh, Grandfather, I am so happy for you. Thank you for writing such a lovely poem! It was worth the long wait. Can you sleep now, Grandfather?

NONNO:

You'll have it typewritten tomorrow?

HANNAH:

Yes. I'll have it typed up and send  
it off to Harper's.

NONNO:

Hah? I didn't hear that, Hannah.

HANNAH [shouting]:

I'll have it typed up tomorrow, and  
mail it to Harper's tomorrow!

They've been waiting for it a long  
time, too! You know!

NONNO:

Yes, I'd like to pray now.

HANNAH:

Good night. Sleep now, Grandfather.

You've finished your loveliest poem.

NONNO [faintly, drifting off]:

Yes, thanks and praise . . .

[Maxine comes around the front of the verandah, followed by Pedro playing a harmonica softly. She is prepared for a night swim, a vividly striped towel thrown over her shoulders. It is apparent that the night's progress has mellowed her spirit: her face wears a faint smile which is suggestive of those cool, impersonal, all-comprehending smiles on the carved heads of Egyptian or Oriental dieties. Bearing a rumcoco, she approaches the hammock, discovers it empty, the ropes on the floor, and calls softly to Pedro.]

MAXINE:

Shannon ha escapade! [Pedro goes on  
playing dreamily. She throws back  
her head and shouts.] SHANNON! [The



call is echoed by the hill beyond.

Pedro advances a few steps and  
points under the verandah.]

PEDRO:

Miré. Allé 'hasta Shannon.

[Shannon comes into view from below the verandah, the severed rope and machete dangling from his hands.]

MAXINE:

What are you doing down there,  
Shannon?

SHANNON:

I cut loose one of God's creatures  
at the end of the rope.

[Hannah, who has stood motionless with closed eyes behind the wicker chair, goes quietly toward the cubicles and out of the moon's glare.]

MAXINE [tolerantly]:

What'd you do that for, Shannon.

SHANNON:

So that one of God's creatures could  
scramble home safe and free. . . . A  
little act of grace, Maxine.

MAXINE [smiling a bit more  
definitely]:

C'mon up here, Shannon. I want to  
talk to you.

SHANNON [starting to climb onto the  
verandah, as Maxine rattles the ice  
in the coconut shell]:

What d'ya want to talk about, Widow  
Faulk?

MAXINE:

Let's go down and swim in that  
liquid moonlight.

SHANNON:

Where did you pick up that poetic  
expression?

[Maxine glances back at Pedro and dismisses him with,  
"Vamos." He leaves with a shrug, the harmonica fading out.]

MAXINE:

Shannon, I want you to stay with me.

SHANNON [taking the rum-coco from  
her]:

You want a drinking companion?

MAXINE:

No, I just want you to stay here,  
because I'm alone here now and I  
need somebody to help me manage the  
place.

[Hannah strikes a match for a cigarette.]

SHANNON [looking toward her]:

I want to remember that face. I  
won't see it again.

MAXINE:

Let's go down to the beach.

SHANNON:

I can make it down the hill, but not  
back up.

MAXINE:

I'll get you back up the hill. [They  
have started off now, toward the  
path down through the rain forest.]  
I've got five more years, maybe ten,  
to make this place attractive to the  
male clientele, the middle-aged ones  
at least. And you can take care of  
the women that are with them. That's  
what you can do, you know that,  
Shannon.

[He chuckles happily. They are now on the path, Maxine half  
leading half supporting him. Their voices fade as Hannah  
goes into Nonno's cubicle and comes back with a shawl, her  
cigarette left inside. She pauses between the door and the  
wicker chair and speaks to herself and the sky.]

HANNAH:

Oh, God, can't we stop now? Finally?  
Please let us. It's so quiet here,  
now.

[She starts to put the shawl about Nonno, but at the same  
moment his head drops to the side. With a soft intake of  
breath, she extends a hand before his mouth to see if he is  
still breathing. He isn't. In a panicky moment, she looks

right and left for someone to call to. There's no one. Then she bends to press her head to the crown of Nonno's]

FREEZE FRAME

DISSOLVE TO THE IMAGE OF THE IGUANA ON THE ORANGE  
BACKGROUND

[CLOSING CREDITS STARTS WITH ``DIRECTED BY..'' ] [ONCE THE CLOSING CREDITS IS OVER THE IMAGE OF THE IGUANA ON THE ORANGE BACKGROUND FADES OUT] (PRODUCTION COMPANY LOGOS APPEAR AT THE END)

(MUSIC: "Palabras de Mujer" (EXTENDED VERSION))