

## ***Permissions***

Ms. *The Night of the Iguana*, by Tennessee Williams.

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## The Night of the Iguana

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**SET:** Wooden verandah of a hotel above the still-water (Morning) beach called Coletta, a few miles outside of Acapulco, Mexico. Bedrooms (narrow cubicles) open off the verandah: at meal-times small tables are set up before the bedrooms—hammocks are suspended, at intervals between the verandah railing and the wall: short flight of steps off stage left end of verandah which is flanked by jungle foliage: a coconut tree and an orange tree heavily fruited.

**TIME:** Summer of 1940

**CHARACTERS:** SHANNON  
MRS. FAULK  
HANNAH JELKES  
HER GRANDFATHER [also called MR. JELKES]  
JUDITH FELLOWES [also called J. F. or JUDITH]  
TWO OR THREE GERMAN TOURISTS  
PEDRO  
PANCHO  
[JAKE LATTA]

**Scene I:** The verandah: Afternoon.

Sounds of a party of female tourists arriving below the hill. MRS. FAULK, the proprietor, a stout, swarthy woman in her middle forties, affable, rapaciously lusty, comes around the turn of the verandah in an unbuttoned blouse and a pair of levis, followed by PEDRO, a Mexican employee, about 20, slim, attractive: a casual lover of hers: he's stuffing his shirt under the belt of his pants and he's sweating as if he'd been working hard in the sun. MRS. FAULK is pleased by the sight of someone coming up the hill from the tourist-bus. She calls out.

**MRS. FAULK:** *SHANNON!*

**SHANNON'S VOICE (Off):** HI!

(Slight pause in which MRS. FAULK lights a cigarette)

**MRS. FAULK:** I had a funny feeling that you were about to show up.

**SHANNON'S VOICE (panting):** Yeah? I hope you got room for eleven old maids from Texas.

(He appears on this line to which SHE responds with a husky laugh: but she

regards him with a hard appraisal of his condition. SHANNON is a young man cracking up: he's about 35: MRS. FAULK hasn't seen him in almost a year and she notes a distinct widening of the cracks: her look is ambivalent: she's not a woman given to sympathetic responses: hardly more than an animal might be: but SHANNON is interesting to her and has been so for years, since he first started bringing parties of tourists to her hotel in Acapulco)

MRS. FAULK: How long you been off it, Shannon?

SHANNON: Off what?

MRS. FAULK: The wagon.

SHANNON: Hell. I'm dizzy with fever. Hundred and three this morning in Cuemavaca. (He has now staggered up onto the verandah)

MRS. FAULK (Advancing to him): Whatcha got wrong with you?

SHANNON: Fever, fever, goddam it! (She touches his forehead)

MRS. FAULK: I don't feel any fever but I smell several days liquor: your breath's so sour I almost hate to kiss you. (She does)

SHANNON: I'm all broke up.

MRS. FAULK: Lie down. (She indicates hammock: HE falls into it) Pedro, get Pancho to help you bring up that luggage. I'll put your Texas old maids in the annex: almost empty. PANCHO! (PANCHO shouts back at a distance) Go on, bring up their luggage to the annex.

SHANNON: How's Fred?

MRS. FAULK: Dead.

SHANNON: —Dead? Did you say "dead"?

MRS. FAULK: Two weeks ago. (Taps her chest)

SHANNON: Heart?

MRS. FAULK: Yeah, I knew it was coming, the way it pounded in bed. PANCHO! (PANCHO runs around in front, below, the verandah) Go on down there with Pedro and bring up the luggage to the annex, will yuh? (HE slackens his pace as he follows this instruction) (MRS. FAULK, to SHANNON in the hammock) I'll put your Texas ladies in the annex and you I'll put in Fred's old room next to me. [Exit MRS. FAULK]

**SHANNON:** No, you won't. I've just been living for this verandah. (A member of Shannon's party, JUDITH FELLOWES, stalks up the verandah steps, militantly)

**J. F.:** Shannon? Shannon!

**SHANNON:** 'Scuse me for not getting up.

**J. F.:** I doubt that you could get up! So stay right there. But we're going on without you.

**SHANNON** (Struggling up to a sitting position in hammock): What's this all about, are you p'd off about something?

**J. F.:** This tour's a cheat! A cheat! You haven't stuck to the itinerary and you haven't stuck to the schedule and your neglect of your duties as a tourist guide is—

**SHANNON** (interrupting): Miss Fellowes? Please sit down. I've known for several days that you were mad about something.

**J. F.:** Not just me, I assure you!

**SHANNON:** No, but—you're the ring-leader.

**J. F.:** Ring-leader of what do you mean, ring-leader?

**SHANNON:** There is always one individual in a party that I take out on a tour that's discontented with everything that I do to make the tour more unique. I don't know why, but that's just the way that it is. And you're the one on this tour. I do all I can to pacify you and please you, but you are not pacified and you are not pleased. Oh, I'm not p'd off about it! I understand it. Believe me, I understand it. I know you resent my friendship with your girl-friend.

**J. F.:** I don't like the implication in what you're saying!

**SHANNON:** Believe me, I'm not saying anything of a—intolerant nature. I didn't make the advances to your girl-friend, she made the advances to me.

**J. F.:** Oh, that! We'll see about that! If you ever get back to Texas you're going to face a charge of statutory rape in that state, Shannon! (In the background, sounds of parrots)

**MRS. FAULK'S VOICE** (off): Shannon, Shannon?

**SHANNON:** Just a minute, please, I'm talking to one of my ladies! (He then turns back to Miss Fellowes. Shannon has lived on his charm, he's operated on that, and he can still turn it on when he's in a tight corner and his charm seems

the only way out) Now, Miss Fellowes. It is perfectly true that we haven't stuck to the itinerary or stuck to the schedule. As advertised in the Drake Tours brochure. *However!* That has been to the party's great advantage.

J. F.: To *your* advantage, I think!—financially, Shannon.

SHANNON: I hope you're not—(Chuckles, shaking his head amiably) accusing me of—

J. F.: Cheating? Yes, I *am!* You're not fooling *me*, not a *minute!* In Mexico City we were supposed to put up at the Hotel Minerva: I've checked on that hotel, it's a fairly good one. But instead you dumped us into the Maximilian which hardly rates third-rate. No private bath. Food? Fit for dogs! Now here in Acapulco it says in the brochure that we are supposed to be at the Ambos Mundos on the plaza in the heart of the city, but you have brought us out here to this God-forsaken place ten miles from nowhere and I have looked at the rooms. They'd make a room at the Y look like a, a, a—suite!—at the Ritz!—No shit—(SHANNON's smile remains, but his mouth is twitching: he turns away slightly and calls.)

SHANNON: Mrs. Faulk? Mrs. Faulk? [MRS. FAULK reenters.] (SHANNON becomes very stately) Oh, Mrs. Faulk. I'd like you to meet one of my charming ladies, one of the charming eleven ladies I've brought you from—

JUDITH: Would you mind giving me a telegraph blank?

SHANNON: Mrs. Faulk? Miss Fellowes, Miss Judith Fellowes from—

JUDITH: I want a telegraph blank, Western Union blank, please!

MRS. FAULK: We got some in the office, around the verandah.

SHANNON: I want you to show Miss Fellowes a sample menu. The Costa Verde is famous for its cuisine.

JUDITH (Suddenly shouting off verandah): Girls! Girls! Don't let those boys touch your luggage, don't let them bring your luggage in this dump!

GIRL'S VOICE (Off): Judy! We can't stop them!

MRS. FAULK: Those kids don't understand English.

JUDITH (Wild with rage): Will you please tell those boys to take that luggage back down to the bus? (Turns to party below again) Girls! Hold on to your luggage, don't let them take it away! We're going to drive back into A-cap-UL-co! You HEAR?

GIRL'S VOICE (Off): Judy, they want a swim, first!

**JUDITH:** Get me that telegraph blank. I'll be right back. (Rushes down steps: pauses for a moment to shout back at Shannon and Mrs. Faulk) I'm going to wire Drake Tours!—about what's been going on. (Rushes off, shouting at the Mexican boys) You! Boys! Muchachos! **CARRY THAT LUGGAGE BACK DOWN!**

**MRS. FAULK:** Shannon? Larry? It looks to me like you've *had it*.

**SHANNON:** What're you grinning about? *Yes*, I've had it. You're goddam right I've had it. And I don't know *how*. And I don't know *why*. But I've *had it*

...

**AN OLD MAN WHO HAS APPEARED [GRANDFATHER]:**

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

(MRS. FAULK and SHANNON observe, for the first time, the arrival below the verandah of MISS JELKES and her GRANDFATHER, a nongenerian poet: world-travellers)

**MRS. FAULK** (To Shannon): Are those two with your party?

**SHANNON:** No. They're not with my eleven . . .

**MRS. FAULK:** What can I do for you folks?

**MISS JELKES:** I'm sorry to say that we've come without reservations.

**MRS. FAULK:** Oh, that's OK. Our rooms are small, but we got an awful lot of 'em. Plenty, plenty for all, even at the height of the season, I mean the winter season.

**MISS JELKES:** How about on this verandah, facing the bay? You see, my grandfather is a poet. I'm a painter. I work in water-color and gouache and I want to work right here on this verandah. Would you like to see some of my work? (She has a portfolio of water-color sketches under one thin arm)

**MRS. FAULK:** No, thank you, not right now. Oh, it's—uh—three fifty a day, Continental plan, in *ADVANCE!* (MISS JELKES'S smile which was very bright now fades as the afternoon is fading: slowly, very regretfully and slowly)

**MISS JELKES:** We—uh—don't operate on—uh—that basis . . .

**MISS FAULK** (Suspiciously): What do you mean "operate"? What "basis" do you operate on?

**MISS JELKES:** Here's our card. I think you may have heard of us. (Presents card to MRS. FAULK) We've had a good many write-ups. My grandfather is the oldest living and practising 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.

**MISS JELKES:** I usually pass among the tables at lunch and dinner in a hotel. I wear an artist's smock, picturesquely dabbled 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. If not? Smile sweetly and go . . . .

**SHANNON:** What does Grandpa do?

**MISS JELKES:** We pass among tables together slowly. I introduce him as the world's oldest living and practising poet. If invited: he gives a recitation of a poem. Unfortunately, all of his poems were written a long time ago. He's ninety-seven years young. He'll be ninety-eight years young the third of September, next month. And do you know he has started a new poem? For the first time in fifty years he's started another poem!

**SHANNON:** Hasn't finished it yet?

**MISS JELKES:** He still has inspiration, but his power of concentration has weakened, of course.

**MRS. FAULK:** Right now he's not concentrating. (The OLD MAN has sunk into a rocker and immediately fallen asleep)

**SHANNON:** Grampa's catchin' forty winks in the rocker. (Crosses to him) Grampa? Let's hit the sack.

**MRS. FAULK:** Now wait a minute. I'm going to call a taxi for these folks to take them back in town.

**MISS JELKES:** 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 gotten him onto his feet and is leading him into an unoccupied cubicle on the verandah. Distant cries of bathers from the beach . . .)

(The afternoon light is fading very fast now as the sun has dropped behind an

island hill-top or the sea horizon)

(MRS. FAULK watches with impatience, muttering. MISS JELKES has opened her portfolio and has produced a water-color done in such pale colors that, in this delicate light, it hardly emerges from the white paper)

MISS JELKES: I didn't make any sales in Mexico City. I'd expected to clean up there! (Laughs with a note of fright)—I think Grandfather's little cerebral accident on the train had—had, had—*un-nerved* me a little, but—

MRS. FAULK: Huh?

MISS JELKES: His resistance is miraculous! With just a few days rest, you won't believe it!—He'll be as fine as ever!—He's ninety-seven years YOUNG!

MRS. FAULK (Grudgingly): Well, it looks like you're in: but just for one night, I'm afraid.

MISS JELKES: Thank you . . .

*THE SCENE DIMS OUT*

SCENE II: Dinner-table, the verandah: the moon is already up and casts more light on the tables, set on the verandah, than the dim light-bulbs.

(MISS JELKES and her GRANDFATHER come out in their professional attire. He is in an ancient white linen suit, clean, starched, with a black string tie. She is in her "picturesquely paint dabbled smock." She bears a fat portfolio of water colors and a box of pastel crayons and paper. On the verandah this evening, for supper, is only a party of Germans who burst into merciless laughter at the appearance of this quaint pair. MISS JELKES draws GRANDFATHER back till the laughter subsides, her smile never fading. Then she bows as if they had been given an ovation and advances to the table and starts to give "the pitch" but GRANDFATHER jumps his cue and goes right into one of his long-ago written poems)

GRANDFATHER (Declaiming as a cock crows at daybreak):

Fear is a monster vast as night  
And comprehensive as the sun.  
He is quicksilver, quick as light  
He slides beneath the down-pressed thumb.

Last night I locked him from my house  
But caught a glimpse of him today  
In a corner, like a mouse,

Gnawing all four walls away.

(But the GERMANS have almost completely drowned it out with their laughter. While the laughter continues, MISS JELKES opens her portfolio and shows them samples of her water-colors and quick character sketches. But their laughter drowns out her voice. Somebody calls them below the verandah, off left, and they respond in German and troop away)

MISS JELKES: Grandfather? NO! SALE! (Her shouting wakes up SHANNON)

SHANNON (Emerging from his room): Hey! How's it going, Grampa?

MISS JELKES: The Germans didn't like us.

SHANNON: Well, *I* like you.

MISS JELKES: That's something to be grateful for. Where are all your ladies?

SHANNON: My ladies are in the annex: new building, plumbing's better. The view's better here, but my ladies prefer better plumbing.

MISS JELKES: I hope everthing's—straightened out?

SHANNON: There's always a rotten apple in every barrel and parties of lady tourists are no exception: she's wired Drake Tours, the outfit that I work for, that I'm violating the brochure, the itinerary and the schedule as represented on their sacred brochure.

MISS JELKES (Nods gravely. There is a curious similarity in their eyes: THEY both have the eyes of people facing a firing-squad: this accounts for the immediate sympathy between them): I've got to sell some water-colors at once! or we can't go on. The—what's her name? Mrs. What? That runs this place?

SHANNON: Faulk. Lucy Faulk, recent widow.

MISS JELKES: She isn't eager to keep us here, you know. But if I could sell your ladies some water colors—

SHANNON: Hah! That bunch of dime-tippers?

MISS JELKES: Well, I'm prepared to sell at whatever's offered. How do I get to the annex?

SHANNON: Right up the hill back of here.

MISS JELKES: Thanks. I'll try my luck. Would you watch my grandfather for a minute? (She goes off with her portfolio)

(SHANNON takes charge of the Old Man: gets him to a table. THE OLD MAN thinks that Shannon is Hannah)

MR. JELKES: Hannah! I'm pretty sure I'm going to finish it here!

SHANNON: I've got the same feeling, Grampa.

MR. JELKES (Shouting): Sure's I've been of anything in my life!

SHANNON (Shouting back): I've never been surer of anything in mine! (MRS. FAULK comes around the verandah)

MRS. FAULK: Sure of what?

SHANNON: He says he's pretty sure he's going to finish it here, and I said I was pretty sure of it, too.

MRS. FAULK: I've got to get them out of here in the morning.

SHANNON: They're at the end of the rope: she's gone up to the annex to hustle her water-colors with my ladies up there. Ha ha!—If that's not the end of the rope I don't know where the rope ends.

MRS. FAULK: Your ladies have gone out in the glass-bottom boat.

SHANNON: It's going to blow up a storm. Who took 'em?

MRS. FAULK: They had me hire the boat for them. How're you feeling?

SHANNON: Wonderful.—Here she comes back. (MISS JELKES returns with portfolio)

MISS JELKES: They've all gone out.

MR. JELKES: Where is—?

MISS JELKES (Rushing up to him): Here I am, Grandfather!

MR. JELKES: My eyes have gone back on me. I thought you—I thought you—

MISS JELKES (Shouting): I took a little *WALK!*

MR. JELKES: This is a wonderful place. Is it time to eat?

SHANNON: YEP! IT'S CHOW TIME, GRAMPA!

**MISS JELKES:** Is this the menu? (She has picked up a paper on the table)

**SHANNON:** Yes, it's the finest piece of rhetoric since Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

**MISS JELKES:** GRANDFATHER? FRENCH ONION SOUP OR SHRIMP COCKTAIL!

**MR. JELKES:** Shrimp? Cocktail? I will take the shrimp cocktail. (He chuckles delightedly. His state of mind is euphoric)

**MISS JELKES** (To Shannon): You see why we have to eat early? Some people are disturbed by the shouting that's necessary. Grandfather? Grandfather? (She has produced a linen napkin from her purse)

**GRANDFATHER:** Annh?

**MISS JELKES:** *Linen napkins!*—(Aside to Shannon) I always carry one with me in case we run into *paper* napkins, you see.—As sometimes happens, you know.

**GRANDFATHER** (Shouting): I FEEL LIKE! RED SNAPPER!

**MISS JELKES:** Grandfather? Grandfather? Wouldn't you like the *lobster thermidor*?

**MR. JELKES:** Lobster? Too much trouble, ha ha, too much—trouble . . . (Chuckles ruefully and suddenly turns to Shannon) I'm ninety-seven years *young*! I'll be ninety-eight years young next month!

**SHANNON:** Attaboy, Grampa! Stay with it, fellow, stay with it! Ha ha ha!

**MISS JELKES:** Grandfather? This is a *creamed* lobster dish. You don't have to pick it out of the *shell*, Grandfather!

**MR. JELKES:** Oh, creamed, is it? I'll *take* it! Hah!

**SHANNON** (Confidentially): The lobster is just creamed crawfish and the beef Stroganoff is, well, did you ever see that old Charlie Chaplin picture where he got so hungry he ate the sole of his shoe?

**MISS JELKES:** Yes, but he did have some salt. Didn't he have a salt shaker?

**SHANNON:** That's right, he sprinkled salt on it and picked the tacks out of his teeth with—(Stops, entranced by the sight of MRS. FAULK rolling a portable bar out on the verandah: he then continues, dreamily, his eyes on the bar. He had resolved not to drink)—an elegant tooth-pick . . .

MISS JELKES (Noticing his distraction): How is the “Poulet Fricassee”?

SHANNON: He did everything elegantly, Chaplin, gracefully, elegantly—serenely—(He half starts toward the bar: halts himself with a little sad chuckle)—serenely—elegantly, yes—a very great artist, Chaplin . . .

MISS JELKES: Poulet Fricassee would be fried chicken, would it? Mr. Shannon? (She understands his struggle: so does MRS. FAULK who has rolled the portable bar directly across from his table) Mr. *Shannon!*

SHANNON: Beg your pardon!

MISS JELKES: Do you recommend the chicken?

SHANNON: Oh, the chicken, you know the Mexican chickens are scavengers, Miss Jelkes, they're not fed, they scavenge and they taste like what they—scavenge: that's my opinion, however. In my opinion your best bet is the fish: definitely. What's she call it tonight? (He picks up the menu but he can't concentrate on it)

MISS JELKES: Why don't you sit down with us, Mr. Shannon? (She indicates a place at the table that would put his back to the bar)

SHANNON: Truite Amandine, she calls it, but it's the same old blue-bone fish: regardless of what she calls it on the menu.

GRANDFATHER (Loudly and slowly, leaning forward): I THINK I WILL HAVE A MANHATTAN COCKTAIL, HANNAH.

MISS JELKES: NOT TONIGHT, GRANDFATHER!

SHANNON (To MRS. FAULK who is conversing in German with a middle-aged German couple at the far end of verandah): Hear that, Lucy? Grampa wants a Manhattan!—I'll fix it for him.

MRS. FAULK: Shannon, I hope that your Texas ladies understand that they're going to pay for their dinner whether they eat it or not. (Shannon has turned to the bar)

SHANNON: First they've got to get back from the glass-bottom boat-trip you sent them out on, don't they, Mrs. Faulk, honey? (His voice is edged with fury)

MRS. FAULK: I didn't SEND them out: they *went* out, Shannon, while you were having your all-afternoon siesta.

SHANNON: Who took'em out, Mrs. Faulk, honey? That ole wino, Juan Chavez?

**MRS. FAULK** (Rising with an exciting sense of imminent contest of power): My, my, Shannon, the pot's got a loud mouth tonight about the kettle! (The German couple laugh)

**SHANNON:** Mrs. Faulk, honey, don't make nervous people more nervous!

**MRS. FAULK:** Let me mix those drinks: you've got the shakes. (With a sudden eruption of rage, HE wheels the bar about and thrusts it toward her so violently that it crashes into the verandah rail, several bottles toppling off. Instantly he rushes off the verandah. MISS JELKES rises, uncertain whether to follow him)

**MRS. FAULK** (Commandingly): It's all right, let him go. (Orders waiter to pick up bottles)—Grampa wants a Manhattan?

**MISS JELKES:** Please don't call him Grampa—it's condescending. My grandfather is a gentleman, Mrs. Faulk, in the true sense of the word. He is a *gentle-man!*

**MRS. FAULK** (At the bar): Miss Jelkes, I've checked my books and—(Pause. SHANNON returns to verandah)—I'll have to find another place for you tomorrow. I'm sorry about the mix-up but the rooms you're occupying tonight are reserved for tomorrow by two of my oldest patrons. Y'see since Fred died, my husband—everything's been sort of balled up, y'see . . . Shannon, I think you'd better go back to bed.

**SHANNON:** Don't think, Lucy!—for me!—I told you, Mrs. Faulk honey, don't make nervous people more nervous, but you wouldn't listen!

**MISS JELKES:** Mr. Shannon, sit down and eat something, please. You'll feel better.

**SHANNON:** I'm not hungry right now.

**MISS JELKES:** Well, just sit down with us, will you? (HE does, dropping his face into his trembling hands. THE GERMAN COUPLE rise from their table and go off the verandah, whispering, grinning.)

**GRANDFATHER** (Leaning forward, shouting): THIS IS THE NICEST PLACE WE'VE BEEN IN A LONG TIME, HANNAH! (MRS. FAULK stands against the wall, looking at Shannon with the look of a boxer measuring an opponent. Wind rises: glimmer of lightning)

**SHANNON:** —How is your grandfather's eyesight?

**MISS JELKES:** Not as good as he wants to make people think. Sometimes he will stop in front of a garage or filling station and say, "This looks like a good place to

eat.”

SHANNON: —It’s blowing up a good storm. . . .

MISS JELKES: I hope that your ladies are not still out in the glass bottom boat, Mr. Shannon.

SHANNON: You hope that because you don’t know the ladies. If you were conducting that party of ladies, you would be unconcerned about whether or not they’re still in the glass-bottom boat. (He is fumbling through his pockets for something)

MISS JELKES: Are you looking for cigarettes? Do you mind if they’re mentholated?

SHANNON: —Thanks. (SHE lights it for him)—How’d you learn how to hold a match in the wind?

MISS JELKES: Oh, I’ve learned lots of things, little useful things like that, through constant travelling.—I wish I’d learned some *big* things . . .

SHANNON: Such as what, Miss Jelkes?

MISS JELKES: How to help *you*, Mr. Shannon.—Do you think you could teach me?

SHANNON: —Now I know why I *came* here! (He takes a tight hold of her hand, his other hand raised to cover the tears in his eyes)

SCENE DIMS OUT

SCENE III: Later that night. The storm’s passed: A full moon makes the verandah as light as day. Inside her cubicle MISS JELKES can be seen writing a letter: Inside his, her GRANDFATHER is sitting bolt upright in bed, composing a poem in his mind with an audible phrase now and then. He looks like a devout old priest conducting a holy service. SHANNON is sprawled in his hammock with his latest rum-coco: the floor is littered with emptied coconut shells, squeezed lemons, used straws . . . Voices of LADIES rise below. MRS. FAULK comes around the turn of the verandah with an air of mysterious satisfaction: she is in negligee, unbecoming.

MRS. FAULK: Shannon? Larry? SHANNON! LARRY! (Staring wide and soft-eyed at the moon, SHANNON is hypnotized by it. It was for the sake of this hypnosis that he came to the Costa Verde. It is taking little needles of undefined anxiety out of his mind, drawing them slowly, gently out, producing a state of trance. The call disturbs him at last: he utters a startled “Huh?”)—Shannon, your

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ladies are going.

**SHANNON:** Doin' what did you say?

**MRS. FAULK:** Leaving, leaving you, Shannon!

**SHANNON:** Hell, they never came back from their moonlight trip in the glass-bottom boat.

**MRS. FAULK:** Oh, yes, they did and a little fat man's arrived and is taking them off in the Drake Tour bus right now. Look! (Points toward voices below) See? Am I lying? (SHANNON scrambles out of hammock and peers over verandah)

**SHANNON** (Shouting down): LADIES! LADIES! Give me your attention one minute! Before you pile into that bus! I am conducting this tour, I am conducting your party! (Laughter below)—Who's that little fat bastard down there with you? Holy smoke, Jake Latta! Hah! Where did they dig him up? What jail did they bail him out of? I never conducted a crooked tour in my life but little Jake Latta—Hi, Jake! (LATTA comes up, puffing, to the verandah) What's going on?

**LATTA:** They wired me in Mexico City to come down here and pick up your party, Shannon.

**SHANNON:** I don't know what the hell you're talking about! Do you know what the hell you're talkin' about?

**LATTA:** Shannon, you're through with Drake Tours: that's what I'm talking about. (MISS JELKES has put down her correspondence pad and her pen. She is looking out at the scene on the verandah with a troubled expression. Her GRANDFATHER continues to declaim passages from his last poem) So lie back in your hammock and have another rum-coco and if you're smart, never move. This is the perfect place for you. Don't cross the Texas border—there's a girl in this party that swears she'll have you arrested for raping her girl-friend. (Starts away)

**SHANNON:** Hold on, you fat-ass bastard! Who do you think you are talkin' to me like this, you crooked—FAT ZERO! I am sick. Everybody's entitled to get sick once! Ask Mrs. Faulk what temperature I'm running! Hundred and three, now higher!—Drake Tours took me to do just what I'm doing. Wouldn't release me for all the tea and all the rice in China! Because I'm a gentleman, Latta. Hell, for three weeks those ladies have had for the first time, probably, in their lives the privilege of association, of contact, with an educated gentleman of good background, that under no other possible circumstances they could have EVER RUN INTO! You know THAT! (JUDITH FELLOWES appears below, she stalks onto verandah) Miss Judith Fellowes, no less!—Jake, did you know they had Lesbians in Texas? Without Miss Fellowes and others in this party, the plains of

Texas would be engulfed by the Gulf! (MISS FELLOWES stalks straight up to him and gives him a hard slap in the face. SHANNON accepts this without flinching or changing his expression but inside her cubicle MISS JELKES gets up from her straight back chair and advances to doorway)

SHANNON: OK. I want my severance pay before you take off with my ladies.

LATTA: Drake tours is refunding these ladies half the price of the tour: that's your severance pay. And how much money have you borrowed off a those ladies?

SHANNON (Bracketed material overlaps slightly): [Latta, I don't hit women but—

LATTA: Huh? How much did you get out of Miss Fellowes' girl-friend? Huh?

MISS J. F.: I can answer that question: she cashed two travellers' cheques the night he showed her the night life of Mexico City. At *her* expense!

SHANNON: That was an extra service, I told her what it would cost her. Latta, I don't hit back at a woman but I will hit a man if he—

MISS J. F.: He took her through ghastly places!]

SHANNON: I showed her San Juan de Latrene. I showed her Tenampa and—

MISS J. F.: Took her into whore-houses!

SHANNON: I showed her places not listed in the brochure! (For the first time, SHANNON exposes an inner passion of feeling for something, and all drunkenness goes) I showed her more than the—Floating Gardens at Xochimilco, Maximilian's palace, the mad Empress Carlotta's little homesick chapel, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the monument to Juarez, the relics of the Inca civilization, the sword of Cortes, the court-dress of Montezuma, I showed her what she told me she wanted to see. Where is she? Where is Miss—what's her name? Totter? Where is Miss—Josephine Totter! Oh! Down there with the ladies! (Leans over rail and shouts down) JOSIE! JOSIE! (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!* (MRS. FAULK appears at the other end of the verandah, with the sort of ceremonial rapidity of a cuckoo bursting out of a clock to announce the hour: she just appears and stands there with an incongruous grin, a drink in one hand, a paper fan in the other, big eyes unblinking as if painted on her round face. MISS JELKES has risen

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from her chair, as quietly and detachedly as if this whole occurrence was the familiar rehearsal of a scene in a play. Her face has the spiritual composure of a plaster saint's)

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!

MISS FELLOWES: In *one night!*—you un-did six months' work putting that girl together after the last time she broke!

SHANNON: Don't exaggerate, please.

MISS FELLOWES: I'm not exaggerating!

SHANNON: 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?!

SHANNON: No. It was not a hotel, my bedroom, but in the labyrinth hedges at San Souci.

MRS. FAULK: HAH!

MISS FELLOWES: Fine, oh, lovely! 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 Miss Josephine fleas. I don't deny that—

MISS FELLOWES: Wait till they get my *report!*

SHANNON: I do not deny that it's possible to get flea-bites on a tour of inspection of what lies under the public surface of cities, among the resorts not listed, off the grand boulevards and away from the smart night-clubs, even away from Diego Rivera's murals, but—

MISS FELLOWES: Just you WAIT: you're THROUGH!

SHANNON: That's not news to me, now.

**GRANDFATHER'S VOICE:**

Oh, Courage, could you not as well  
Select a second place to dwell!

**MRS. FAULK:** HAH! (Drains her glass and starts fanning her puffy red face. MISS JELKES closes her eyes)

**LATTA:** I hope that you realize, Miss Fellowes, that our outfit, Drake Tours, will be just as surprised as you were to learn what type of character was conducting your party on this tour.

**SHANNON:** Come off it, Latta. I've been with Drake Tours a couple years longer than you.

**LATTA:** The office will see that the way you've handled this party will be circulated through every travel-agency in the States and Europe!

**SHANNON:** Don't forget Africa, Asia. I have conducted parties on those continents too, and allowed the ones that were willing to expose their hearts, if they had hearts to expose, to the rare, the very exceptional chance of being touched and moved by the depths and the dregs, yes, by the depths and the—

**LATTA:** GIT BACK INTO YOUR HAMMOCK!—have another rum-coco, you sick lush! That's the rest of your life, you know that, Shannon. Hell, you'll never get off this verandah again except to pick up a coconut for a rum-coco, come on, Miss Fellowes, the ladies are waiting for us. (THEY go off. LATTA's voice is heard shouting—)

**LATTA:** *OK, let's get cracking! Get these pieces of luggage into the bus!*

(Panting, SHANNON suddenly rushes forward: runs off down the path to the road. There is a great commotion below, shrieks of outrage and some high squeals of shocked laughter)

(MRS. FAULK charges onto verandah and off it, shouting down—)

**MRS. FAULK:** PEDRO! PANCHO! GET SHANNON BACK UP HERE! STOP HIM! etc.

(The LADIES' clamor is drowned by the roar of the bus engine starting up. MISS JELKES comes out on the verandah, looking shattered but still with that air of spiritual composure: in the soft light, she looks like the figure of a medieval saint in a painting or sculpture)

(SHANNON returns, panting, spent. He is followed by MRS. FAULK)

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**MRS. FAULK:** Shannon, go in your room and stay there till that party's gone!

**SHANNON:** Don't give me orders!

**MRS. FAULK:** 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, Lucy!

**MRS. FAULK:** All right, do as I say!

**SHANNON:** SHANNON obeys only SHANNON!

**MRS. FAULK:** You'll sing a very different tune if they put you where they put you in 'thirty six. Remember 'thirty six, Shannon?

**SHANNON:** OK, Lucy, just—let me breathe alone, please. I won't go in but I will lie in a—hammock . . .

**MRS. FAULK:** Come on around to Fred's room where I can watch you.

**SHANNON:** *Later: not yet, Lucy!*

**MRS. FAULK:** Why do you always come *here* to crack up, Shannon?

**SHANNON:** It's the hammocks, Lucy, the hammocks by the rain-forest over the still-water beach . . .

**GRANDFATHER'S VOICE:**

A chronicle no longer gold,  
A bargaining with mist and mould—

**MRS. FAULK:** QUIET, PLEASE! PEOPLE SLEEP HERE!—I'll see you later, Shannon.

**SHANNON:** Where's a machete, I want to make a rum-coco. (He has picked up a coconut fallen to the ground: shakes it to see if it's dry: drops it and picks up another.)

**MRS. FAULK:** Go up and rest in your hammock. I'll have the boys fix your rum-coco. (She goes around the verandah, off. The German couple have come out on the verandah, exchanging whispers in German.)

**GERMAN MAN (To Shannon):** Vot did you do to cause all this disturbance?

**SHANNON (Falling into hammock):** I committed a public nuisance all over the luggage of eleven ladies from Texas, teachers and students at a Baptist female

college. I baptized their luggage . . .

**GERMAN MAN:** (Repeats this in German to his wife. They go off laughing, down the path to the beach. SHANNON lies back in his hammock. MISS JELKES comes out on the verandah with a silver teapot and a spirit lamp.)

**MISS JELKES:** You seem to have gotten yourself into a difficult situation, Mr. Shannon. (She sets the spirit lamp on a little table against the wall.)

**SHANNON:** My God, he's in the rain-forest!

**MISS JELKES:** Who is in the rain-forest?

**SHANNON:** The spook!—He's creeping and crawling around in the rain-forest out there! (He is sitting up in the hammock, staring fiercely over the low verandah rail into the tropical forest outside the proscenium. Monkeys and jungle birds cry out softly.)

**MISS JELKES** (As if he had made a rational remark): Oh, him! Never mind him . . . (She lights a blue flame under spirit-lamp) If he's creeping and crawling around in the rain-forest, he isn't as brave as you are, Mr. Shannon.

**SHANNON:** Ugly son of a bitch with the foulest breath I ever had breathed in my face.

**MISS JELKES:** Oh, does he breathe in you face? He comes that close sometimes?

**SHANNON:** Sometimes he stands next to me as close as you are, Miss Jelkes . . . (Falls back into a reclining position in hammock) What are you doing, are you making something with that spirit-lamp there?

**MISS JELKES:** I'm making a poppy-seed tea.

**SHANNON:** —Did I understand you to say that you were making a poppy-seed tea, a tea out of poppy-seeds, huh?

**MISS JELKES:** That's right, Mr. Shannon.

**SHANNON:** Are you a slave to the *poppy*?

**MISS JELKES:** It's not enslaving, it's not at all strong, it isn't habit-forming, but it gets you through nights that are hard for you to get through.

**SHANNON:** —Are you having one of those nights?

**MISS JELKES:** I am brewing this poppy-seed tea for *you*, Mr. T. Lawrence Shannon.

**SHANNON:** They're making me a rum-coco. Madam Frog, Mrs. Faulk, is a sort of a corrupt nurse, a decadent member of the profession of Florence Nightingale, with motives less than noble, I mean with an axe to grind—between her vigorous, rickety, middle-aged limbs!—I don't mean to say I despise her: Hell, I don't dislike her. I have a tolerant nature. *However!*—well, however . . .

**MISS JELKES:** Is the spook still visible, out there in the rain-forest? (She has set her dainty tea-pot on the dainty blue flame of her spirit lamp and has lighted a mentholated cigarette.)

**SHANNON:** Don't see him right this minute.

**MISS JELKES:** Well, he must have retreated—maybe retired from the field.

**SHANNON:** At best, temporarily: he'll re-appear tonight and creep and crawl closer maybe so close I'll smell his rotten old breath.

**MISS JELKES:** Cowardly creature! I can't stand creepers and crawlers.—Here! It could be stronger, but I think it will help . . . (She has poured him a cup of her poppy-seed tea.)

**SHANNON** (Accepting the cup, blowing on it as he speaks): I saw him first time this time at Lake Chapala. I woke up one hot morning in Chapala, at the Hotel Nido, and there he was, sitting on my clothes on the chair beside my bed there,—sitting! Grinning and sitting!—I started drinking at once. He starts me drinking always.—He disappeared for the day but he re-appeared that night, so I had to pass out. Then I knew I would have to get my ladies, regardless of the schedule and the itinerary as represented in the sacred brochure—as fast as possible to this place between the rain-forest and the still-water beach called Coletta . . .

**MISS JELKES:** Has this happened to you before?

**SHANNON:** Have I been sacked before do y' mean?

**MISS JELKES:** No, that's not what I mean.

**SHANNON:** (Touchily) Well, then. What do you mean "has this happened to me before," has *what* happened to me before.

**MISS JELKES:** Would you prefer for me to mind my own business, Shannon?

**SHANNON:** —No. I like the sound of your voice: you've got a quality of—*mercy* in your voice which—*isn't*—strained . . .

**MISS JELKES:** —It's happened to me, the same thing that you're going through: that's why I asked if it's happened to you before.

SHANNON: —It happened to *you*, you said?

MISS JELKES: Yes. Ten years ago.—I went to a doctor who suggested that I have what he called a “companionate marriage.” He said my problem was starvation for love. I told him that I did not equate love with the sex-act. I didn’t, of course, have the—“companionate marriage”—Grandfather and I started our travels, then. And gradually, gradually, there was a little light at the end of the tunnel: do you know what I mean?

SHANNON: Yeah:—yeah, what was the light?

MISS JELKES: I started looking at things outside myself. (Pause: SHANNON takes jerky quick puffs on his cigarette but what she says has scored)—I hadn’t before because what was going on inside of myself was such a turbulent thing that it was hard to divert myself, for any other distraction to catch my—attention . . .

SHANNON: But finally something did?

MISS JELKES: By starting to paint and sketch, oh, yes, lots of things did. That occupation forced me to look at things: skies, oceans—light . . . human faces, especially human faces! And so, gradually, gradually, I started seeing this clear grey light at the far end of the tunnel and it became clearer and clearer as I went on toward it . . .

SHANNON: But stayed grey, huh?

MISS JELKES: No. It turned white.

SHANNON: Never gold, just white?

MISS JELKES: No, never gold, only white, but white’s a good color, Shannon. White’s my favorite color. (A little shy laugh)—They accuse me of painting in a limited spectrum!—a narrow range of color—the disadvantage of a virginal mind . . .

SHANNON: Hmmm! (Reflectively and warmly)—Hmmm!—Sometimes the mind is more virginal than the body, Miss Jelkes, I mean than the body would like: isn’t that so?

MISS JELKES: I’ve learned to do without sex: there’s worse things than celibacy, Shannon.

SHANNON: Yes. There’s lunacy, and death: they’re worse than a life without love, I reckon—a little . . .

MISS JELKES: Shannon, why don’t you answer my question? Has this happened to you before?

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**SHANNON:** —Yes.—I've cracked up before:—twice before, well—three times before, in all, yes, about three times before: required—*hospitalization!* (Tosses cigarette fiercely off verandah)—well, now you know, I have answered your question! (SHE places her hand on his)

**MISS JELKES:** Thank you.—I wonder if maybe your failure to equate love with anything except sex may not be the root of your problem.

**SHANNON:** Let's not talk like this!—psychological blamey.

**MISS JELKES** (With her light, shy laugh):—All right, we'll drop that discussion, we will change the subject!—Tell me! What is that scraping, scuffling sound that I keep hearing right under this 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 like T. Larry Shannon and get any *further* it *cannot!* Ha ha—that's it . . .

**MR. JELKES'S VOICE** (Loud and exalted):  
And still the orange and the branch  
Observe the sky begin to blanch  
Without a cry, without a prayer,  
With no betrayal of despair.

(This incident has diverted the thoughts of SHANNON and MISS JELKES)

**SHANNON:** Do you have any life of your own? Besides your—water-colors?

(Pause: singing on beach below)

**MISS JELKES:** 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!—made of wood, bricks, stone! I think of a home as being a thing that two people have between them in which each can—what? Well, NEST! REST!—ABIDE in, EMOTIONALLY speaking . . . (Pause) Do you understand me? Does that make any sense to you, Mr. Shannon?

**SHANNON:** —YEAH! COMPLETE!

**MISS JELKES:** When Grandfather stops, *I* will stop. If *I* should stop, so would he . . . (Another pause: singing on the beach)—with his last poem unfinished . . . (Pause) What did you say that continual scraping, scuffling noise is down there under the verandah?

**SHANNON:** I've got a flashlight. I'll show you. It's an Iguana. I'll show you . . . (He has managed to get out of the hammock and gone into his dark cubicle: he turns a dim light on in it and comes out with a flashlight which he turns upon the source of the scuffling sound beneath the verandah. What it illuminates is obscured from the audience by cactus plants . . . ) 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 Grandpa with his last poem!

(Pause. Singing from the beach)

**MISS JELKES:** What is a—what?—Iguana?

**SHANNON:** It's a kind of lizard: a big one, a giant one: Mexican kids caught and tied it up.

**MISS JELKES:** 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?

**MISS JELKES:** Mr. Shannon, please go down and cut it loose!

**SHANNON:** I can't do that.

**MISS JELKES:** 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 . . .

**MISS JELKES:** 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 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 rubber-neck bus along a tropical sea-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 more familiar ladies sometimes call me Larry. I didn't use the four letter word for what the great mound was. It wasn't necessary. I didn't think it was necessary to say it, I mean the smell was—unmistakable! Then she noticed, and I noticed, too, a pair of very old

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natives of this nameless country, practically naked except for a few filthy rags, creeping and crawling about this mound of—and—occasionally stooping to pick something out of it, and pop it into their mouths! What? Bits of undigested—food—particles, Miss Jelkes. (Silence. SHE makes a gagging sound in her throat and rushes the length of the verandah to the wooden steps down it and disappears for a while)

SHANNON (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. It's better not to tell her because it's true. Yeah. Because it's true was a good reason not to tell her. Except!—I think it started in that nameless country. The gradual, rapid, inevitable, evitable, natural, unnatural,—predestined, accidental—crackingup 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 . . . At our—conductor devoted to tropical countries, and not even in the cool seasons, in the deliberately, intentionally hot seasons in the hot, steaming tropical countries! Can I blame that on always—No, I mean I can blame always on—No, I mean—cool drinks being necessary. Cruelty or pity? Which? Why not both? That's right: they're in the same boat . . . So I stay here, I reckon, and live off Mme. Frog for the rest of my life. Well, she's old enough to pre-decease 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! Which is it?—Don't know, all I know is it started in countries where—

MISS JELKES'S VOICE (Below): You're talking to yourself.

SHANNON: No. To you. I knew you could hear me down there. But not being able to see you I could say it easier, though: you know?

GRANDFATHER'S VOICE: (From his bedroom)

A chronicle no longer gold,  
A bargaining with mist and mould . . .

MISS JELKES (Returning to the verandah): While I was down there, I saw the Iguana.

SHANNON: You did? Well, how didja like it? Charming? Attractive?

MISS JELKES: It's not an attractive creature, but nevertheless I think it should

be cut loose. They've tied it up by a rope around its neck, and it's making a desperate effort to crawl away to the bushes. Mr. Shannon? Larry? Will you please cut it loose, set it free?

SHANNON: They wouldn't like that. They were very pleased with themselves for catching the goddam thing.

MISS JELKES: I am not pleased. Are you?

SHANNON: Are you a member of the SPCA? Does that society take an interest in lizards?

MISS JELKES: I take an interest in lizards and in *any* creature that's capable of suffering and *panic*. I saw the lizard. It's suffering from pain and terrible panic.

SHANNON: You think it's one of God's creatures, huh?

MISS JELKES: If you want to put it that way, yes, it is. We're all of us some of God's creatures. Why did they tie it up? For what purpose?

SHANNON: They save it to fatten it up till they are ready to eat it. They say it's a gourmet's delight, it tastes like white meat of chicken. *Breast* of—

MISS JELKES: I know what I'm going to do. I am going to cut it loose if you won't do it for me.

SHANNON: Why?

MISS JELKES: Well, it . . . I guess it . . . it reminds me of my grandfather. At the end of life's rope: a poet: blind: deaf: living to write a last poem he'll never write. I mean, not the lizard but the lizard's—desperation! I don't mean his desperation, but his situation! I don't mean—(She starts to cry helplessly)

SHANNON: I know what you mean, Miss Jelkes. You don't have to try to explain what you mean to Shannon. Now Shannon is going to go down there with his machete and cut the damn lizard loose, so it can crawl into the bushes. Huh? Hah? OK?

MISS JELKES: Thank you. So much. Larry . . . (SHANNON descends with machete. The low, excited muttering from GRANDFATHER'S cubicle grows louder. He suddenly raises his voice in a great shout)

MR. JELKES: HANNAH! *HANN-NAHHH!* (SHE rushes to him, turning on the naked light bulb in the narrow cubicle. The ancient poet is sitting up on the edge of his cot, his gnarled hands knotted together as if in prayer)

MISS JELKES: Grandfather! What is it?

**MR. JELKES:** I! BELIEVE! IT! IS!—*FINISHED!* Quick! Before I forget it! Pencil! Paper! QUICK! PLEASE! Ready?

**MISS JELKES:** Yes. All ready, Grandfather.

**MR. JELKES:** (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 on that golden tree  
But in the frightened heart of me?

Got it?

**MISS JELKES:** Yes!

**MR. JELKES:** All of it?

**MISS JELKES:** Every word of it.

MR. JELKES: Is it *finished*?

MISS JELKES: Yes.

MR. JELKES: OH, GOD, FINALLY FINISHED?

MISS JELKES: YES! FINALLY FINISHED! (She is crying: the singing voices float up from the beach of Coletta)

MR. JELKES: After waiting so long!

MISS JELKES: Yes, we waited so long!

MR. JELKES: And it's good! Is it *good*?

MISS JELKES: It's, it's—

MR. JELKES: WHAT?

MISS JELKES: BEAUTIFUL, Grandfather. (Springs up a fist to her mouth)

GERMAN VOICE: *QUIET!*

MISS JELKES: Oh, Grandfather! I'm so happy for you! Thank you for writing such a lovely poem! It was worth the long wait. Can you sleep now, Grandfather?

MR. JELKES: You'll have it typewritten tomorrow?

MISS JELKES: Yes. I'll have it typed up and send it off to Harper's.

MR. JELKES: Hah? I DIDN'T HEAR THAT, HANNAH!

MISS JELKES (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?

MR. JELKES: Turn out the light. I like to pray in the dark. (SHE turns off the dim suspended light bulb. The moonlight is almost brighter. She bends to kiss his forehead and goes to the door)

MISS JELKES: Good night. Sleep now, Grandfather. You've finished your loveliest poem.

MR. JELKES: Yes, thank the Lord, praise God! (He waits till she has gone quietly out of his bedroom: then he falls to his knees beside his cot)

THANKS AND PRAISE BE TO THEE, O HEAVENLY FATHER FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW!

(MISS JELKES hears this and says softly, "Amen." Not sentimentally: not falsely, either. She looks up and down the verandah for Shannon but SHANNON has stayed below the verandah where he cut loose the Iguana. Machete dangling from hand, he has leaned back against the wood post the Iguana was tied to, during the Old Man's declamation of his last poem. He has nodded several times in solemn agreement to the shouted poem. Now MRS. FAULK comes around to the front verandah in a robe)

MRS. FAULK: *Please. People are sleeping!*

MISS JELKES: I think the German party's still on the beach, Mrs. Faulk. Yes, they're still singing down there.

MRS. FAULK: *I'm not on the beach and I would like to sleep!*

MISS JELKES: I'm so sorry. It won't happen again. My grandfather finished his poem.

SHANNON (Below): *How about that?*

MRS. FAULK: Shannon? (Looks over rail) What're you doing down there?

SHANNON: I cut loose one of God's creatures at the end of a rope.

MRS. FAULK: Did you cut loose the Iguana? (She rushes down to him)

SHANNON (Raising severed rope and machete with a smile): I did that. You see?

MRS. FAULK: What did you do that for?

SHANNON (Smiling drunkenly): So that one of God's creatures could go home, safe and free . . . (MRS. FAULK's face takes on a tolerant look. She takes hold of Shannon's belt)

MRS. FAULK (Softly): Let's go down and swim in the liquid moonlight.

SHANNON: Where did you pick up that poetic expression? (Chuckles and sways a little. Above, MISS JELKES strikes a match for a cigarette. HE looks up) Go on down and swim in the liquid moonlight. I got my liquid moonlight in a coconut shell . . .

MRS. FAULK: I want to talk to you. Come here. (Jerks her head toward end of verandah, away from Miss Jelkes's position above) Come on! (SHANNON is

passed the point of resistance, of power to resist a tone as commanding as that. And so he complies. Above: MISS JELKES closes her eyes)

**MRS. FAULK:** Fred's dead. I've been waiting for you. I want you to stay with me, Shannon.

**SHANNON:** What would I do with you, Lucy?

**MRS. FAULK:** Stay, just stay! I don't want to stay *alone* here, see? Also I think you could make the place more attractive the way that you used to make Drake Tours attractive. Huh? How about it, Shannon! Come on down and let's swim—away from the German party, off by the rocks! (The Germans are singing "Heimweh" down on the beach)

**SHANNON:** OK. Go down and wait for me.

**MRS. FAULK:** No! You come down with me now! (SHANNON looks up at Miss Jelkes)

**SHANNON:** Miss Jelkes? The Iguana's cut loose and gone home.

**MISS JELKES:** Thank you so much, Shannon—Larry . . . .

**SHANNON:** G'night, Miss Jelkes. Another one of God's creatures is goin' down to th' beach to swim in the—"liquid moonlight." (Instead of a vocal reply, SHE raises a hand to her mouth. SHANNON submits to the guiding hand and supporting arm of MRS. FAULK as she leads him down to the beach. They disappear among the jungle foliage that masks the path down. Pause: the singing below)

**MISS JELKES** (To herself and the sky): *OH, GOD! CAN WE STOP, NOW?* (Inside his cubicle-bedroom, the OLD MAN is making several feeble efforts to climb back onto his bed: impossible. With a soft cry he falls onto the floor beside the cot and lies there, lifeless) **FINALLY? PLEASE LET US! IT'S SO QUIET HERE, NOW.**

*CURTAIN*