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Cloud Nine

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Cloud Nine

Cloud Nine was written for Joint Stock Theatre Group in 1978-79. The company's usual work method is to set up a workshop in which the writer, director and actors research a particular subject. The writer then goes away to write the play, before returning to the company for a rehearsal and rewrite period. In the case of *Cloud Nine* the workshop lasted for three weeks, the writing period for twelve, and the rehearsal for six.

The workshop for *Cloud Nine* was about sexual politics. This meant that the starting point for our research was to talk about ourselves and share our very different attitudes and experiences. We also explored stereotypes and role reversals in games and improvisations, read books and talked to other people. Though the play's situations and characters were not developed in the workshop, it draws deeply on this material, and I wouldn't have written the same play without it.

When I came to write the play, I returned to an idea that had been touched on briefly in the workshop – the parallel between colonial and sexual oppression, which Genet calls 'the colonial or feminine mentality of interiorised repression'. So the first act of *Cloud Nine* takes place in Victorian Africa, where Clive, the white man, imposes his ideals on his family and the natives. Betty, Clive's wife, is played by a man because she wants to be what men want her to be, and, in the same way, Joshua, the black servant, is played by a white man because he wants to be what whites want him to be. Betty does not value herself as a woman, nor does Joshua value himself as a black. Edward, Clive's son, is played by a woman for a different reason – partly to do with the stage convention of having boys played by women (Peter Pan, radio plays, etc.) and partly with highlighting the way Clive tries to impose traditional male behaviour on him. Clive struggles throughout the act to maintain the world he wants to see – a faithful wife, a manly son. Harry's homosexuality is reviled, Ellen's is invisible. Rehearsing the play for the first time, we were initially taken by how funny the first act was and then by the painfulness of the

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the labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little
 dance with increase: this is also vanity.
 never shan't be satisfied with silver; nor he
 the earth is for all: the king himself is
 than the highest regardeth; and
 poor, and violent perverting
 province, marvel not at the
 I'll do. Avenge your baby
 Cromwell set England free. And
 no murder. He wanted to free Eng
 Dead.
 BB: God won't be stopped.
 RUK: I'm God. I'm God.
 IGS: Yes, amen, look who's God now.

relationships – which then became more funny than when they had seemed purely farcical.

The second act is set in London in 1979 – this is where I wanted the play to end up, in the changing sexuality of our own time. Betty is middle-aged, Edward and Victoria have grown up. A hundred years have passed, but for the characters only twenty-five years. There were two reasons for this. I felt the first act would be stronger set in Victorian times, at the height of colonialism, rather than in Africa during the 1950s. And when the company talked about their childhoods and the attitudes to sex and marriage that they had been given when they were young, everyone felt that they had received very conventional, almost Victorian expectations and that they had made great changes and discoveries in their lifetimes.

The first act, like the society it shows, is male dominated and firmly structured. In the second act, more energy comes from the women and the gays. The uncertainties and changes of society, and a more feminine and less authoritarian feeling, are reflected in the looser structure of the act. Betty, Edward and Victoria all change from the rigid positions they had been left in by the first act, partly because of their encounters with Gerry and Lin.

In fact, all the characters in this act change a little for the better. If men are finding it hard to keep control in the first act, they are finding it hard to let go in the second: Martin dominates Victoria, despite his declarations of sympathy for feminism, and the bitter end of colonialism is apparent in Lin's soldier brother, who dies in Northern Ireland. Betty is now played by a woman, as she gradually becomes real to herself. Cathy is played by a man, partly as a simple reversal of Edward being played by a woman, partly because the size and presence of a man on stage seemed appropriate to the emotional force of young children, and partly, as with Edward, to show more clearly the issues involved in learning what is considered correct behaviour for a girl.

It is essential for Joshua to be played by a white, Betty (I) by a man, Edward (I) by a woman, and Cathy by a man. The soldier should be played by the actor who plays Cathy. The doubling of Mrs Saunders and Ellen is not intended to make a point so much as for sheer fun – and of course to keep the company to seven in

each act. The doubling can be done in any way that seems right for any particular production. The first production went Clive-Cathy, Betty-Edward, Edward-Betty, Maud-Victoria, Mrs Saunders/Ellen-Lin, Joshua-Gerry, Harry-Martin. When we did the play again, at the Royal Court in 1980, we decided to try a different doubling: Clive-Edward, Betty-Gerry, Edward-Victoria, Maud-Lin, Mrs Saunders/Ellen-Betty, Joshua-Cathy, Harry-Martin. I've a slight preference for the first way because I like seeing Clive become Cathy, and enjoy the Edward-Betty connections. Some doublings aren't practicable, but any way of doing the doubling seems to set up some interesting resonances between the two acts.

C.C. 1983

Characters

ACT ONE

CLIVE, a colonial administrator
 BETTY, his wife, played by a man
 JOSHUA, his black servant, played by a white
 EDWARD, his son, played by a woman
 VICTORIA, his daughter, a dummy
 MAUD, his mother-in-law
 ELLEN, Edward's governess
 HARRY BAGLEY, an explorer
 MRS SAUNDERS, a widow

ACT TWO

BETTY
 EDWARD, her son
 VICTORIA, her daughter
 MARTIN, Victoria's husband
 LIN
 CATHY, Lin's daughter age 5, played by a man
 GERRY, Edward's lover

Except for Cathy, characters in Act II are played by actors of their own sex.

Act One takes place in a British colony in Africa in Victorian times.

Act Two takes place in London in 1979. But for the characters it is twenty-five years later.

Cloud Nine was first performed at Dartington College of Arts on Wednesday 14 February 1979 by the Joint Stock Theatre Group, then on tour and at the Royal Court Theatre, London, with the following cast:

ACT ONE

CLIVE Anthony Sher
 BETTY Jim Hooper
 JOSHUA Tony Rohr
 EDWARD Julie Covington
 MAUD Miriam Margolyes
 ELLEN/MRS SAUNDERS Carole Hayman
 HARRY BAGLEY William Hoyland

ACT TWO

BETTY Julie Covington
 EDWARD Jim Hooper
 VICTORIA Miriam Margolyes
 MARTIN William Hoyland
 LIN Carole Hayman
 CATHY Anthony Sher
 GERRY Tony Rohr
 Director Max Stafford-Clark
 Assistant Director Les Waters
 Designer Peter Hartwell
 Musical Director Andy Roberts
 Lighting Designer Robin Myerscough-Walker

The text

The first edition of *Cloud Nine* (Pluto/Joint Stock 1979) went to press before the end of rehearsal. Further changes were made within the first week or two of production, and these were incorporated in the Pluto/Joint Stock/Royal Court edition 1980. This edition also went to press during rehearsal, so although it may include some small changes made for that production, others don't turn up till the Pluto Plays edition 1983, which also includes a few changes from the American production, a few lines cut here or reinstated there. Other changes for the American production can be found in French's American acting edition – the main ones are the position of Betty's monologue and some lines of the 'ghosts'. For the Fireside Bookclub and Methuen Inc (1984) in America I did another brushing up, not very different from Pluto '83, and I have kept almost the same text for this edition. The scenes I tinker with most are the flogging scene and Edward's and Gerry's last scene – I no longer know what's the final version except by looking at the text.

There's a problem with the Maud and Ellen reappearances in Act Two. If Ellen is doubled with Betty, obviously only Maud can appear. Equally Maud-Betty would mean only Ellen could, though that seems a dull doubling. This text gives both Maud and Ellen. In the production at the Court in 1981 only Maud appeared and she has some extra lines so she can talk about sex as well as work; they can be found in Pluto 1983.

C.C. 1984

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Low bright sun. Verandah. Flagpole with union jack. The Family

– CLIVE, BETTY, EDWARD, VICTORIA, MAUD, ELLEN,
JOSHUA

ALL [*sing*]:

Come gather, sons of England, come gather in your pride.
Now meet the world united, now face it side by side;

Ye who the earth's wide corners, from veldt to prairie, roam.

From bush and jungle muster all who call old England 'home'.

Then gather round for England,

Rally to the flag,

From North and South and East and West

Come one and all for England!

CLIVE:

This is my family. Though far from home

We serve the Queen wherever we may roam

I am a father to the natives here,

And father to my family so dear.

[*He presents BETTY. She is played by a man.*]

My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be,

And everything she is she owes to me.

BETTY:

I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life

Is to be what he looks for in a wife.

I am a man's creation as you see,

And what men want is what I want to be.

[*CLIVE presents JOSHUA. He is played by a white.*]

CLIVE:

My boy's a jewel. Really has the knack.

You'd hardly notice that the fellow's black.

JOSHUA:

My skin is black but oh my soul is white.

I hate my tribe. My master is my light.

I only live for him. As you can see,
What white men want is what I want to be.

[CLIVE presents EDWARD. *He is played by a woman.*]

CLIVE:

My son is young. I'm doing all I can
To teach him to grow up to be a man.

EDWARD:

What father wants I'd dearly like to be.
I find it rather hard as you can see.

[CLIVE presents VICTORIA, *who is a dummy*, MAUD, and ELLEN.]

CLIVE:

No need for any speeches by the rest.
My daughter, mother-in-law, and governess.

ALL [*sing*]:

O'er countless numbers she, our Queen,
Victoria reigns supreme;

O'er Afric's sunny plains, and o'er

Canadian frozen stream;

The forge of war shall weld the chains of brotherhood secure;
So to all time in ev'ry clime our Empire shall endure.

Then gather round for England,

Rally to the flag,

From North and South and East and West

Come one and all for England!

[*All go except BETTY. CLIVE comes.*]

BETTY: Clive?

CLIVE: Betty. Joshua!

[JOSHUA comes with a drink for CLIVE.]

BETTY: I thought you would never come. The day's so long
without you.

CLIVE: Long ride in the bush.

BETTY: Is anything wrong? I heard drums.

CLIVE: Nothing serious. Beauty is a damned good mare. I must
get some new boots sent from home. These ones have never been
right. I have a blister.

BETTY: My poor dear foot.

CLIVE: It's nothing.

BETTY: Oh but it's sore.

CLIVE: We are not in this country to enjoy ourselves. Must have
ridden fifty miles. Spoke to three different headmen who would
all gladly chop off each other's heads and wear them round
their waists.

BETTY: Clive!

CLIVE: Don't be squeamish, Betty, let me have my joke. And what
has my little dove done today?

BETTY: I've read a little.

CLIVE: Good. Is it good?

BETTY: It's poetry.

CLIVE: You're so delicate and sensitive.

BETTY: And I played the piano. Shall I send for the children?

CLIVE: Yes, in a minute. I've a piece of news for you.

BETTY: Good news?

CLIVE: You'll certainly think it's good. A visitor.

BETTY: From home?

CLIVE: No. Well of course originally from home.

BETTY: Man or woman?

CLIVE: Man.

BETTY: I can't imagine.

CLIVE: Something of an explorer. Bit of a poet. Odd chap but
brave as a lion. And a great admirer of yours.

BETTY: What do you mean? Whoever can it be?

CLIVE: With an H and a B. And does conjuring tricks for little
Edward.

BETTY: That sounds like Mr Bagley.

CLIVE: Harry Bagley.

BETTY: He certainly doesn't admire me, Clive, what a thing to
say. How could I possibly guess from that. He's hardly explored
anything at all, he's just been up a river, he's done nothing at
all compared to what you do. You should have said a heavy
drinker and a bit of a bore.

CLIVE: But you like him well enough. You don't mind him
coming?

BETTY: Anyone at all to break the monotony.

CLIVE: But you have your mother. You have Ellen.

BETTY: Ellen is a governess. My mother is my mother.
CLIVE: I hoped when she came to visit she would be company for you.

BETTY: I don't think mother is on a visit. I think she lives with us.
CLIVE: I think she does.

BETTY: Clive you are so good.

CLIVE: But are you bored my love?

BETTY: It's just that I miss you when you're away. We're not in this country to enjoy ourselves. If I lack society that is my form of service.

CLIVE: That's a brave girl. So today has been all right? No fainting? No hysteria?

BETTY: I have been very tranquil.

CLIVE: Ah what a haven of peace to come home to. The coolth, the calm, the beauty.

BETTY: There is one thing, Clive, if you don't mind.

CLIVE: What can I do for you, my dear?

BETTY: It's about Joshua.

CLIVE: I wouldn't leave you alone here with a quiet mind if it weren't for Joshua.

BETTY: Joshua doesn't like me.

CLIVE: Joshua has been my boy for eight years. He has saved my life. I have saved his life. He is devoted to me and to mine. I have said this before.

BETTY: He is rude to me. He doesn't do what I say. Speak to him.

CLIVE: Tell me what happened.

BETTY: He said something improper.

CLIVE: Well, what?

BETTY: I don't like to repeat it.

CLIVE: I must insist.

BETTY: I had left my book inside on the piano. I was in the hammock. I asked him to fetch it.

CLIVE: And did he not fetch it?

BETTY: Yes, he did eventually.

CLIVE: And what did he say?

BETTY: Clive —

CLIVE: Betty.

BETTY: He said Fetch it yourself. You've got legs under that dress.

CLIVE: Joshua!

[JOSHUA comes.]

Joshua, madam says you spoke impolitely to her this afternoon.

JOSHUA: Sir?

CLIVE: When she asked you to pass her book from the piano.

JOSHUA: She has the book, sir.

BETTY: I have the book now, but when I told you —

CLIVE: Betty, please, let me handle this. You didn't pass it at once?

JOSHUA: No sir, I made a joke first.

CLIVE: What was that?

JOSHUA: I said my legs were tired, sir. That was funny because the book was very near, it would not make my legs tired to get it.

BETTY: That's not true.

JOSHUA: Did madam hear me wrong?

CLIVE: She heard something else.

JOSHUA: What was that, madam?

BETTY: Never mind.

CLIVE: Now Joshua, it won't do you know. Madam doesn't like that kind of joke. You must do what madam says, just do what she says and don't answer back. You know your place, Joshua. I don't have to say any more.

JOSHUA: No sir.

BETTY: I expect an apology.

JOSHUA: I apologise, madam.

CLIVE: There now. It won't happen again, my dear. I'm very shocked Joshua, very shocked.

[CLIVE *winks* at JOSHUA, *unseen* by BETTY. JOSHUA *goes*.]

CLIVE: I think another drink, and send for the children, and isn't that Harry riding down the hill? Wave, wave. Just in time before dark. Cuts it fine, the blighter. Always a hothead, Harry.

BETTY: Can he see us?

CLIVE: Stand further forward. He'll see your white dress. There, he waved back.

BETTY: Do you think so? I wonder what he saw. Sometimes sunset is so terrifying I can't bear to look.

CLIVE: It makes me proud. Elsewhere in the empire the sun is rising.

BETTY: Harry looks so small on the hillside.

[ELLEN comes.]

ELLEN: Shall I bring the children?

BETTY: Shall Ellen bring the children?

CLIVE: Delightful.

BETTY: Yes, Ellen, make sure they're warm. The night air is deceptive. Victoria was looking pale yesterday.

CLIVE: My love.

[MAUD comes from inside the house.]

MAUD: Are you warm enough Betty?

BETTY: Perfectly.

MAUD: The night air is deceptive.

BETTY: I'm quite warm. I'm too warm.

MAUD: You're not getting a fever, I hope? She's not strong, you know, Clive. I don't know how long you'll keep her in this climate.

CLIVE: I look after Her Majesty's domains. I think you can trust me to look after my wife.

[ELLEN comes carrying VICTORIA, age 2. EDWARD, aged 9, lags behind.]

BETTY: Victoria, my pet, say good evening to papa.

[CLIVE takes VICTORIA on his knee.]

CLIVE: There's my sweet little Vicky. What have we done today?

BETTY: She wore Ellen's hat.

CLIVE: Did she wear Ellen's big hat like a lady? What a pretty.

BETTY: And Joshua gave her a piggy back. Tell papa. Horsy with Joshy?

ELLEN: She's tired.

CLIVE: Nice Joshy played horsy. What a big strong Joshy. Did you have a gallop? Did you make him stop and go? Not very chatty tonight are we?

BETTY: Edward, say good evening to papa.

CLIVE: Edward my boy. Have you done your lessons well?

EDWARD: Yes papa.

CLIVE: Did you go riding?

EDWARD: Yes papa.

CLIVE: What's that you're holding?

BETTY: It's Victoria's doll. What are you doing with it, Edward?

EDWARD: Minding her.

BETTY: Well I should give it to Ellen quickly. You don't want papa to see you with a doll.

CLIVE: No, we had you with Victoria's doll once before, Edward.

ELLEN: He's minding it for Vicky. He's not playing with it.

BETTY: He's not playing with it, Clive. He's minding it for Vicky.

CLIVE: Ellen minds Victoria, let Ellen mind the doll.

ELLEN: Come, give it to me. *[CLIVE & ELLEN'S SEX. CONF. ON.]*
[ELLEN takes the doll.]

EDWARD: Don't pull her about. Vicky's very fond of her. She likes me to have her.

BETTY: He's a very good brother.

CLIVE: Yes, it's mainly of you Edward, to take care of your little sister. We'll say no more about it. Tomorrow I'll take you riding with me and Harry Bagley. Would you like that?

EDWARD: Is he here?

CLIVE: He's just arrived. There Betty, take Victoria now. I must go and welcome Harry.

[CLIVE tosses VICTORIA to BETTY, who gives her to ELLEN.]

EDWARD: Can I come, papa?

BETTY: Is he warm enough?

EDWARD: Am I warm enough?

CLIVE: Never mind the women, Ned. Come and meet Harry.

[They go. The women are left. There is a silence.]

MAUD: I daresay Mr Bagley will be out all day and we'll see nothing of him.

BETTY: He plays the piano. Surely he will sometimes stay at home with us.

MAUD: We can't expect it. The men have their duties and we have ours.

BETTY: He won't have seen a piano for a year. He lives a very rough life.

ELLEN: Will it be exciting for you, Betty?

MAUD: Whatever do you mean, Ellen?
ELLEN: We don't have very much society.

BETTY: Clive is my society.

MAUD: It's time Victoria went to bed.

ELLEN: She'd like to stay up and see Mr Bagley.

MAUD: Mr Bagley can see her tomorrow.

[ELLEN goes.]

MAUD: You let that girl forget her place, Betty.

BETTY: Mother, she is governess to my son. I know what her place is. I think my friendship does her good. She is not very happy.

MAUD: Young women are never happy.

BETTY: Mother, what a thing to say.

MAUD: Then when they're older they look back and see that comparatively speaking they were ecstatic.

BETTY: I'm perfectly happy.

MAUD: You are looking very pretty tonight. You were such a success as a young girl. You have made a most fortunate marriage. I'm sure you will be an excellent hostess to Mr Bagley.

BETTY: I feel quite nervous at the thought of entertaining.

MAUD: I can always advise you if I'm asked.

BETTY: What a long time they're taking. I always seem to be waiting for the men.

MAUD: Betty you have to learn to be patient. I am patient. My mama was very patient.

[CLIVE approaches, supporting CAROLINE SAUNDERS.]

CLIVE: It is a pleasure. It is an honour. It is positively your duty to seek my help. I would be hurt, I would be insulted by any show of independence. Your husband would have been one of my dearest friends if he had lived. Betty, look who has come, Mrs Saunders. She has ridden here all alone, amazing spirit. What will you have? Tea or something stronger? Let her lie down, she is overcome. Betty, you will know what to do.

[MRS SAUNDERS lies down.]

MAUD: I knew it. I heard drums. We'll be killed in our beds.

CLIVE: Now, please, calm yourself.

MAUD: I am perfectly calm. I am just outspoken. If it comes to being killed I shall take it as calmly as anyone.

CLIVE: There is no cause for alarm. Mrs Saunders has been alone since her husband died last year, amazing spirit. Not surprisingly, the strain has told. She has come to us as her nearest neighbours.

MAUD: What happened to make her come?

CLIVE: This is not an easy country for a woman.

MAUD: Clive, I heard drums. We are not children.

CLIVE: Of course you heard drums. The tribes are constantly at war, if the term is not too grand to grace their squabbles. Not unnaturally Mrs Saunders would like the company of white women. The piano. Poetry.

BETTY: We are not her nearest neighbours.

CLIVE: We are among her nearest neighbours and I was a dear friend of her late husband. She knows that she will find a welcome here. She will not be disappointed. She will be cared for.

MAUD: Of course we will care for her.

BETTY: Victoria is in bed. I must go and say goodnight. Mother, please, you look after Mrs Saunders.

CLIVE: Harry will be here at once.

[BETTY goes.]

MAUD: How rash to go out after dark without a shawl.

CLIVE: Amazing spirit. Drink this.

MRS SAUNDERS: Where am I?

MAUD: You are quite safe.

MRS SAUNDERS: Clive? Clive? Thank God. This is very kind.

How do you do? I am sorry to be a nuisance. Charmed. Have you a gun? I have a gun.

CLIVE: There is no need for guns I hope. We are all friends here.

MRS SAUNDERS: I think I will lie down again.

[HARRY BAGLEY and EDWARD have approached.]

MAUD: Ah, here is Mr Bagley.

EDWARD: I gave his horse some water.

CLIVE: You don't know Mrs Saunders, do you Harry? She has at present collapsed, but she is recovering thanks to the good offices of my wife's mother who I think you've met before. Betty

will be along in a minute. Edward will go home to school shortly. He is quite a young man since you saw him.

HARRY: I hardly knew him.

MAUD: What news have you for us, Mr Bagley?

CLIVE: Do you know Mrs Saunders, Harry? Amazing spirit.

EDWARD: Did you hardly know me?

HARRY: Of course I knew you. I mean you have grown.

EDWARD: What do you expect?

HARRY: That's quite right, people don't get smaller.

MAUD: Edward. You should be in bed.

EDWARD: No, I'm not tired, I'm not tired am I Uncle Harry?

HARRY: I don't think he's tired.

CLIVE: He is overtired. It is past his bedtime. Say goodnight.

EDWARD: Goodnight, sir.

CLIVE: And to your grandmother.

EDWARD: Goodnight, grandmother.

[EDWARD goes.]

MAUD: Shall I help Mrs Saunders indoors? I'm afraid she may get a chill.

CLIVE: Shall I give her an arm?

MAUD: How kind of you Clive. I think I am strong enough.

[MAUD helps MRS SAUNDERS into the house.]

CLIVE: Not a word to alarm the women.

HARRY: Absolutely.

CLIVE: I did some good today I think. Kept up some alliances. There's a lot of affection there.

HARRY: They're affectionate people. They can be very cruel of course.

CLIVE: Well they are savages.

HARRY: Very beautiful people many of them.

CLIVE: Joshua! [To HARRY.] I think we should sleep with guns.

HARRY: I haven't slept in a house for six months. It seems extremely safe.

[JOSHUA comes.]

CLIVE: Joshua, you will have gathered there's a spot of bother. Rumours of this and that. You should be armed I think.

JOSHUA: There are many bad men, sir. I pray about it. Jesus will protect us.

CLIVE: He will indeed and I'll also get you a weapon. Betty, come and keep Harry company. Look in the barn, Joshua, every night.

[CLIVE and JOSHUA go. BETTY comes.]

HARRY: I wondered where you were.

BETTY: I was singing lullabies.

HARRY: When I think of you I always think of you with Edward in your lap.

BETTY: Do you think of me sometimes then?

HARRY: You have been thought of where no white woman has ever been thought of before.

BETTY: It's one way of having adventures. I suppose I will never go in person.

HARRY: That's up to you.

BETTY: Of course it's not. I have duties.

HARRY: Are you happy, Betty?

BETTY: Where have you been?

HARRY: Built a raft and went up the river. Stayed with some people. The king is always very good to me. They have a lot of skulls around the place but not white men's I think. I made up a poem one night. If I should die in this forsaken spot, There is a loving heart without a blot, Where I will live — and so on.

BETTY: When I'm near you it's like going out into the jungle. It's like going up the river on a raft. It's like going out in the dark.

HARRY: And you are safety and light and peace and home.

BETTY: But I want to be dangerous.

HARRY: Clive is my friend.

BETTY: I am your friend.

HARRY: I don't like dangerous women.

BETTY: Is Mrs Saunders dangerous?

HARRY: Not to me. She's a bit of an old boot.

[JOSHUA comes, unobserved.]

BETTY: Am I dangerous?

HARRY: You are rather.

BETTY: Please like me.

HARRY: I worship you.

BETTY: Please want me.

HARRY: I don't want to want you. Of course I want you.

BETTY: What are we going to do?

HARRY: I should have stayed on the river. The hell with it.
[He goes to take her in his arms, she runs away into the house. HARRY stays where he is. He becomes aware of JOSHUA.]

HARRY: Who's there?

JOSHUA: Only me sir.

HARRY: Got a gun now have you?

JOSHUA: Yes sir.

HARRY: Where's Clive?

JOSHUA: Going round the boundaries sir.

HARRY: Have you checked there's nobody in the barns?

JOSHUA: Yes sir.

HARRY: Shall we go in a barn and fuck? It's not an order.

JOSHUA: That's all right, yes.

[They go off.]

SCENE TWO

An open space some distance from the house. MRS SAUNDERS alone, breathless. She is carrying a riding crop. CLIVE arrives.

CLIVE: Why? Why?

MRS SAUNDERS: Don't fuss, Clive, it makes you sweat.

CLIVE: Why ride off now? Sweat, you would sweat if you were in love with somebody as disgustingly capricious as you are. You will be shot with poisoned arrows. You will miss the picnic. Somebody will notice I came after you.

MRS SAUNDERS: I didn't want you to come after me. I wanted to be alone.

CLIVE: You will be raped by cannibals.

MRS SAUNDERS: I just wanted to get out of your house.

CLIVE: My God, what women put us through. Cruel, cruel. I think you are the sort of woman who would enjoy whipping somebody. I've never met one before.

MRS SAUNDERS: Can I tell you something, Clive?

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

CLIVE: Let me tell you something first. Since you came to the house I have had an erection twenty-four hours a day except for ten minutes after the time we had intercourse.

MRS SAUNDERS: I don't think that's physically possible.

CLIVE: You are causing me appalling physical suffering. Is this the way to treat a benefactor?

MRS SAUNDERS: Clive, when I came to your house the other night I came because I was afraid. The cook was going to let his whole tribe in through the window.

CLIVE: I know that, my poor sweet. Amazing -

MRS SAUNDERS: I came to you although you are not my nearest neighbour -

CLIVE: Rather than to the old major of seventy-two.

MRS SAUNDERS: Because the last time he came to visit me I had to defend myself with a shotgun and I thought you would take no for an answer.

CLIVE: But you've already answered yes.

MRS SAUNDERS: I answered yes once. Sometimes I want to say no.

CLIVE: Women, my God. Look the picnic will start, I have to go to the picnic. Please Caroline -

MRS SAUNDERS: I think I will have to go back to my own house.

CLIVE: Caroline, if you were shot with poisoned arrows do you know what I'd do? I'd fuck your dead body and poison myself. Caroline, you smell amazing. You terrify me. You are dark like this continent. Mysterious. Treacherous. When you rode to me through the night. When you fainted in my arms. When I came to you in your bed, when I lifted the mosquito netting, when I said let me in, let me in. Oh don't shut me out, Caroline, let me in.

[He has been caressing her feet and legs. He disappears completely under her skirt.]

MRS SAUNDERS: Please stop. I can't concentrate. I want to go home. I wish I didn't enjoy the sensation because I don't like you, Clive. I do like living in your house where there's plenty of guns. But I don't like you at all. But I do like the sensation. Well I'll have it then. I'll have it, I'll have it -

[Voices are heard singing The First Noël.]

Don't stop. Don't stop.

[CLIVE comes out from under her skirt.]

CLIVE: The Christmas picnic. I came.

MRS SAUNDERS: I didn't.

CLIVE: I'm all sticky.

MRS SAUNDERS: What about me? Wait.

CLIVE: All right, are you? Come on. We mustn't be found.

MRS SAUNDERS: Don't go now.

CLIVE: Caroline, you are so voracious. Do let go. Tidy yourself up. There's a hair in my mouth.

[CLIVE and MRS SAUNDERS go off. BETTY and MAUD come, with JOSHUA carrying hamper.]

MAUD: I never would have thought a guinea fowl could taste so like a turkey.

BETTY: I had to explain to the cook three times.

MAUD: You did very well dear.

[JOSHUA sits apart with gun. EDWARD and HARRY with VICTORIA on his shoulder, singing *The First Noël*. MAUD and BETTY are unpacking the hamper. CLIVE arrives separately.]

MAUD: This tablecloth was one of my mama's.

BETTY: Uncle Harry playing horsy.

EDWARD: Crackers crackers.

BETTY: Not yet, Edward.

CLIVE: And now the moment we have all been waiting for.

[CLIVE opens champagne. General acclaim.]

CLIVE: Oh dear, stained my trousers, never mind.

EDWARD: Can I have some?

MAUD: Oh no Edward, not for you.

CLIVE: Give him half a glass.

MAUD: If your father says so.

CLIVE: All rise please. To Her Majesty Queen Victoria, God bless her, and her husband and all her dear children.

ALL: The Queen.

EDWARD: Crackers crackers.

[General cracker pulling, hats. CLIVE and HARRY discuss champagne.]

HARRY: Excellent, Clive, wherever did you get it?

CLIVE: I know a chap in French Equatorial Africa.

EDWARD: I won, I won mama.

[ELLEN arrives.]

BETTY: Give a hat to Joshua, he'd like it.

[EDWARD takes hat to JOSHUA. BETTY takes a ball from the hamper and plays catch with ELLEN. Murmurs of surprise and congratulations from the men whenever they catch the ball.]

EDWARD: Mama, don't play. You know you can't catch a ball.

BETTY: He's perfectly right. I can't throw either.

[BETTY sits down. ELLEN has the ball.]

EDWARD: Ellen, don't you play either. You're no good. You spoil it.

[EDWARD takes VICTORIA from HARRY and gives her to

ELLEN. He takes the ball and throws it to HARRY. HARRY,

CLIVE and EDWARD play ball.]

BETTY: Ellen come and sit with me. We'll be spectators and clap.

[EDWARD misses the ball.]

CLIVE: Butterfingers.

EDWARD: I'm not.

HARRY: Throw straight now.

EDWARD: I did, I did.

CLIVE: Keep your eye on the ball.

EDWARD: You can't throw.

CLIVE: Don't be a baby.

EDWARD: I'm not, throw a hard one, throw a hard one -

CLIVE: Butterfingers. What will Uncle Harry think of you?

EDWARD: It's your fault. You can't throw. I hate you.

[He throws the ball wildly in the direction of JOSHUA.]

CLIVE: Now you've lost the ball. He's lost the ball.

EDWARD: It's Joshua's fault. Joshua's butterfingers.

CLIVE: I don't think I want to play any more. Joshua, find the ball will you?

EDWARD: Yes, please play. I'll find the ball. Please play.

CLIVE: You're so silly and you can't catch. You'll be no good at cricket.

MAUD: Why don't we play hide and seek?

EDWARD: Because it's a baby game.

BETTY: You've hurt Edward's feelings.
 CLIVE: A boy has no business having feelings.
 HARRY: Hide and seek. I'll be it. Everybody must hide. This is the base, you have to get home to base.
 EDWARD: Hide and seek, hide and seek.
 HARRY: Can we persuade the ladies to join us?
 MAUD: I'm playing. I love games.
 BETTY: I always get found straight away.
 ELLEN: Come on, Betty, do. Vicky wants to play.
 EDWARD: You won't find me ever.

[*They all go except CLIVE, HARRY, JOSHUA.*]

HARRY: It is safe, I suppose?
 CLIVE: They won't go far. This is very much my territory and it's broad daylight. Joshua will keep an open eye.
 HARRY: Well I must give them a hundred. You don't know what this means to me, Clive. A chap can only go on so long alone. I can climb mountains and go down rivers, but what's it for? For Christmas and England and games and women singing. This is the empire, Clive. It's not me putting a flag in new lands. It's you. The empire is one big family. I'm one of its black sheep, Clive. And I know you think my life is rather dashing. But I want you to know I admire you. This is the empire, Clive, and I serve it. With all my heart.
 CLIVE: I think that's about a hundred.
 HARRY: Ready or not, here I come!

[*He goes.*]

CLIVE: Harry Bagley is a fine man, Joshua. You should be proud to know him. He will be in history books.
 JOSHUA: Sir, while we are alone.
 CLIVE: Joshua of course, what is it? You always have my ear. Any time.
 JOSHUA: Sir, I have some information. The stable boys are not to be trusted. They whisper. They go out at night. They visit their people. Their people are not my people. I do not visit my people.
 CLIVE: Thank you, Joshua. They certainly look after Beauty. I'll be sorry to have to replace them.
 JOSHUA: They carry knives.
 CLIVE: Thank you, Joshua.

JOSHUA: And, sir.
 CLIVE: I appreciate this, Joshua, very much.
 JOSHUA: Your wife.
 CLIVE: Ah, yes?
 JOSHUA: She also thinks Harry Bagley is a fine man.
 CLIVE: Thank you, Joshua.
 JOSHUA: Are you going to hide?
 CLIVE: Yes, yes I am. Thank you. Keep your eyes open Joshua.
 JOSHUA: I do, sir.

[*CLIVE goes. JOSHUA goes. HARRY and BETTY race back to base.*]

BETTY: I can't run, I can't run at all.
 HARRY: There, I've caught you.
 BETTY: Harry, what are we going to do?
 HARRY: It's impossible, Betty.
 BETTY: Shall we run away together?
 [MAUD comes.]
 MAUD: I give up. Don't catch me. I have been stung.
 HARRY: Nothing serious I hope.
 MAUD: I have ointment in my bag. I always carry ointment. I shall just sit down and rest. I am too old for all this fun. Hadn't you better be seeking, Harry?

[*HARRY goes. MAUD and BETTY are alone for some time. They don't speak. HARRY and EDWARD race back.*]

EDWARD: I won, I won, you didn't catch me.
 HARRY: Yes I did.
 EDWARD: Mama, who was first?
 BETTY: I wasn't watching. I think it was Harry.
 EDWARD: It wasn't Harry. You're no good at judging. I won, didn't I grandma?
 MAUD: I expect so, since it's Christmas.
 EDWARD: I won, Uncle Harry. I'm better than you.
 BETTY: Why don't you help Uncle Harry look for the others?
 EDWARD: Shall I?
 HARRY: Yes, of course.
 BETTY: Run along then. He's just coming.
 [EDWARD goes.]
 Harry, I shall scream.

HARRY: Ready or not, here I come.

[HARRY runs off.]

BETTY: Why don't you go back to the house, mother, and rest your insect-bite?

MAUD: Betty, my duty is here. I don't like what I see. Clive wouldn't like it, Betty. I am your mother.

BETTY: Clive gives you a home because you are my mother.

[HARRY comes back.]

HARRY: I can't find anyone else. I'm getting quite hot.

BETTY: Sit down a minute.

HARRY: I can't do that. I'm he. How's your sting?

MAUD: It seems to be swelling up.

BETTY: Why don't you go home and rest? Joshua will go with you. Joshua!

HARRY: I could take you back.

MAUD: That would be charming

BETTY: You can't go. You're he.

[JOSHUA comes.]

BETTY: Joshua, my mother wants to go back to the house. Will you go with her please.

JOSHUA: Sir told me I have to keep an eye.

BETTY: I am telling you to go back to the house. Then you can come back here and keep an eye.

MAUD: Thank you Betty. I know we have our little differences, but I always want what is best for you.

[JOSHUA and MAUD go.]

HARRY: Don't give way. Keep calm.

BETTY: I shall kill myself.

HARRY: Betty, you are a star in my sky. Without you I would have no sense of direction. I need you, and I need you where you are, I need you to be Clive's wife. I need to go up rivers and know you are sitting here thinking of me.

BETTY: I want more than that. Is that wicked of me?

HARRY: Not wicked, Betty. Silly.

[EDWARD calls in the distance.]

EDWARD: Uncle Harry, where are you?

BETTY: Can't we ever be alone?

HARRY: You are a mother. And a daughter. And a wife.

BETTY: I think I shall go and hide again.

[BETTY goes. HARRY goes. CLIVE chases MRS SAUNDERS across the stage. EDWARD and HARRY call in the distance.]

EDWARD: Uncle Harry!

HARRY: Edward!

[EDWARD comes.]

EDWARD: Uncle Harry!

[HARRY comes.]

There you are. I haven't found anyone have you?

HARRY: I wonder where they all are.

EDWARD: Perhaps they're lost forever. Perhaps they're dead. There's trouble going on isn't there, and nobody says because of not frightening the women and children.

HARRY: Yes, that's right.

EDWARD: Do you think we'll be killed in our beds?

HARRY: Not very likely.

EDWARD: I can't sleep at night. Can you?

HARRY: I'm not used to sleeping in a house.

EDWARD: If I'm awake at night can I come and see you? I won't wake you up. I'll only come in if you're awake.

HARRY: You should try to sleep.

EDWARD: I don't mind being awake because I make up adventures. Once we were on a raft going down to the rapids. We've lost the paddles because we used them to fight off the crocodiles. A crocodile comes at me and I stab it again and again and the blood is everywhere and it tips up the raft and it has you by the leg and it's biting your leg right off and I take my knife and stab it in the throat and rip open its stomach and it lets go of you but it bites my hand but it's dead. And I drag you onto the river bank and I'm almost fainting with pain and we lie there in each other's arms.

HARRY: Have I lost my leg?

EDWARD: I forgot about the leg by then.

HARRY: Hadn't we better look for the others?

EDWARD: Wait. I've got something for you. It was in mama's box but she never wears it.

[EDWARD gives HARRY a necklace.]

You don't have to wear it either but you might like it to look at.

HARRY: It's beautiful. But you'll have to put it back.
 EDWARD: I wanted to give it to you.
 HARRY: You did. It can go back in the box. You still gave it to me.
 Come on now, we have to find the others.

EDWARD: Harry, I love you.
 HARRY: Yes I know. I love you too.
 EDWARD: You know what we did when you were here before. I want to do it again. I think about it all the time. I try to do it myself but it's not as good. Don't you want to any more?
 HARRY: I do, but it's a sin and a crime and it's also wrong.
 EDWARD: But we'll do it anyway won't we?
 HARRY: Yes of course.
 EDWARD: I wish the others would all be killed. Take it out now and let me see it.

HARRY: No.
 EDWARD: Is it big now?
 HARRY: Yes.
 EDWARD: Let me touch it.
 HARRY: No.
 EDWARD: Just hold me.
 HARRY: When you can't sleep.
 EDWARD: We'd better find the others then. Come on.
 HARRY: Ready or not, here we come.

[They go out with whoops and shouts. BETTY and ELLEN come.]

BETTY: Ellen, I don't want to play any more.
 ELLEN: Nor do I, Betty.
 BETTY: Come and sit here with me. Oh Ellen, what will become of me?

ELLEN: Betty, are you crying? Are you laughing?
 BETTY: Tell me what you think of Harry Bagley.
 ELLEN: He's a very fine man.
 BETTY: No, Ellen, what you really think.
 ELLEN: I think you think he's very handsome.
 BETTY: And don't you think he is? Oh Ellen, you're so good and I'm so wicked.
 ELLEN: I'm not so good as you think.
[EDWARD comes.]

EDWARD: I've found you.
 ELLEN: We're not hiding Edward.
 EDWARD: But I found you.
 ELLEN: We're not playing, Edward, now run along.
 EDWARD: Come on, Ellen, do play. Come on, mama.
 ELLEN: Edward, don't pull your mama like that.
 BETTY: Edward, you must do what your governess says. Go and play with Uncle Harry.
 EDWARD: Uncle Harry!

[EDWARD goes.]

BETTY: Ellen, can you keep a secret?
 ELLEN: Oh yes, yes please.
 BETTY: I love Harry Bagley. I want to go away with him. There, I've said it, it's true.

ELLEN: How do you know you love him?
 BETTY: I kissed him.
 ELLEN: Betty.
 BETTY: He held my hand like this. Oh I want him to do it again. I want him to stroke my hair.
 ELLEN: Your lovely hair. Like this, Betty?
 BETTY: I want him to put his arm around my waist.
 ELLEN: Like this, Betty?
 BETTY: Yes, oh I want him to kiss me again.
 ELLEN: Like this Betty?

[ELLEN kisses BETTY.]

BETTY: Ellen, whatever are you doing? It's not a joke.
 ELLEN: I'm sorry, Betty. You're so pretty. Harry Bagley doesn't deserve you. You wouldn't really go away with him?
 BETTY: Oh Ellen, you don't know what I suffer. You don't know what love is. Everyone will hate me, but it's worth it for Harry's love.

ELLEN: I don't hate you, Betty, I love you.
 BETTY: Harry says we shouldn't go away. But he says he worships me.

ELLEN: I worship you Betty.
 BETTY: Oh Ellen, you are my only friend.
[They embrace. The others have all gathered together. MAUD has rejoined the party, and JOSHUA.]

CLIVE: Come along everyone, you mustn't miss Harry's conjuring trick.

[BETTY and ELLEN go to join the others.]

MAUD: I didn't want to spoil the fun by not being here.

HARRY: What is it that flies all over the world and is up my sleeve?

[HARRY produces a union jack from up his sleeve. General acclaim.]

CLIVE: I think we should have some singing now. Ladies, I rely on you to lead the way.

ELLEN: We have a surprise for you. I have taught Joshua a Christmas carol. He has been singing it at the piano but I'm sure he can sing it unaccompanied, can't you, Joshua?

JOSHUA:

In the deep midwinter

Frosty wind made moan,

Earth stood hard as iron,

Water like a stone.

Snow had fallen snow on snow

Snow on snow,

In the deep midwinter

Long long ago.

What can I give him

Poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd

I would bring a lamb.

If I were a wise man

I would do my part

What I can I give him,

Give my heart.

SCENE THREE

Inside the house. BETTY, MRS SAUNDERS, MAUD with VICTORIA. The blinds are down so the light isn't bright though it is day outside. CLIVE looks in.

CLIVE: Everything all right? Nothing to be frightened of.

[CLIVE goes. Silence.]

MAUD: Clap hands, daddy comes, with his pockets full of plums. All for Vicky.

[Silence.]

MRS SAUNDERS: Who actually does the flogging?

MAUD: I don't think we want to imagine.

MRS SAUNDERS: I imagine Joshua.

BETTY: Yes I think it would be Joshua. Or would Clive do it himself?

MRS SAUNDERS: Well we can ask them afterwards.

MAUD: I don't like the way you speak of it, Mrs Saunders.

MRS SAUNDERS: How should I speak of it?

MAUD: The men will do it in the proper way, whatever it is. We have our own part to play.

MRS SAUNDERS: Harry Bagley says they should just be sent away. I don't think he likes to see them beaten.

BETTY: Harry is so tender hearted. Perhaps he is right.

MAUD: Harry Bagley is not altogether — He has lived in this country a long time without any responsibilities. It is part of his charm but it hasn't improved his judgment. If the boys were just sent away they would go back to the village and make more trouble.

MRS SAUNDERS: And what will they say about us in the village if they've been flogged?

BETTY: Perhaps Clive should keep them here.

MRS SAUNDERS: That is never wise.

BETTY: Whatever shall we do?

MAUD: I don't think it is up to us to wonder. The men don't tell us what is going on among the tribes, so how can we possibly make a judgment?

MRS SAUNDERS: I know a little of what is going on.
 BETTY: Tell me what you know. Clive tells me nothing.
 MAUD: You would not want to be told about it, Betty. It is enough for you that Clive knows what is happening. Clive will know what to do. Your father always knew what to do.
 BETTY: Are you saying you would do something different, Caroline?

MRS SAUNDERS: I would do what I did at my own home. I left. I can't see any way out except to leave. I will leave here. I will keep leaving everywhere I suppose.

MAUD: Luckily this household has a head. I am squeamish myself. But luckily Clive is not.

BETTY: You are leaving here then, Caroline?

MRS SAUNDERS: Not immediately. I'm sorry.

[*Silence.*]

MRS SAUNDERS: I wonder if it's over.

[*EDWARD comes in.*]

BETTY: Shouldn't you be with the men, Edward?

EDWARD: I didn't want to see any more. They got what they deserved. Uncle Harry said I could come in.

MRS SAUNDERS: I never allowed the servants to be beaten in my own house. I'm going to find out what's happening.

[*MRS SAUNDERS goes out.*]

BETTY: Will she go and look?

MAUD: Let Mrs Saunders be a warning to you, Betty. She is alone in the world. You are not, thank God. Since your father died, I know what it is to be unprotected. Vicky is such a pretty little girl. Clap hands, daddy comes, with his pockets full of plums. All for Vicky.

[*EDWARD, meanwhile, has found the doll and is playing clap hands with her.*]

BETTY: Edward, what have you got there?

EDWARD: I'm minding her.

BETTY: Edward, I've told you before, dolls are for girls.

MAUD: Where is Ellen? She should be looking after Edward. [*She goes to the door.*] Ellen! Betty, why do you let that girl mope about in her own room? That's not what she's come to Africa for.

BETTY: You must never let the boys at school know you like dolls. Never, never. No one will talk to you, you won't be on the cricket team, you won't grow up to be a man like your papa.

EDWARD: I don't want to be like papa. I hate papa.

MAUD: Edward! Edward!

BETTY: You're a horrid wicked boy and papa will beat you. Of course you don't hate him, you love him. Now give Victoria her doll at once.

EDWARD: She's not Victoria's doll, she's my doll. She doesn't love Victoria and Victoria doesn't love her. Victoria never even plays with her.

MAUD: Victoria will learn to play with her.

EDWARD: She's mine and she loves me and she won't be happy if you take her away, she'll cry, she'll cry, she'll cry.

[*BETTY takes the doll away, slaps him, bursts into tears.*]

[*ELLEN comes in.*]

BETTY: Ellen, look what you've done. Edward's got the doll again. Now, Ellen, will you please do your job.

ELLEN: Edward, you are a wicked boy. I am going to lock you in the nursery until supper time. Now go upstairs this minute.

[*She slaps EDWARD, who bursts into tears and goes out.*]

I do try to do what you want. I'm so sorry.

[*ELLEN bursts into tears and goes out.*]

MAUD: There now, Vicky's got her baby back. Where did Vicky's naughty baby go? Shall we smack her? Just a little smack [*MAUD smacks the doll hard.*] There, now she's a good baby.

Clap hands, daddy comes, with his pockets full of plums. All for Vicky's baby. When I was a child we honoured our parents. My mama was an angel. *but Ellen is not a baby.*

[*JOSHUA comes in. He stands without speaking.*]

BETTY: Joshua?

JOSHUA: Madam?

BETTY: Did you want something?

JOSHUA: Sent to see the ladies are all right, madam.

[*MRS SAUNDERS comes in.*]

MRS SAUNDERS: We're very well thank you, Joshua, and how are you?

JOSHUA: Very well thank you, Mrs Saunders.

MRS SAUNDERS: And the stable boys?
 JOSHUA: They have had justice, madam.
 MRS SAUNDERS: So I saw. And does your arm ache?
 MAUD: This is not a proper conversation, Mrs Saunders.
 MRS SAUNDERS: You don't mind beating your own people?
 JOSHUA: Not my people, madam.
 MRS SAUNDERS: A different tribe?
 JOSHUA: Bad people.

[HARRY and CLIVE come in.]

CLIVE: Well this is all very gloomy and solemn. Can we have the shutters open? The heat of the day has gone, we could have some light, I think. And cool drinks on the verandah, Joshua. Have some lemonade yourself. It is most refreshing.

[*Sunlight floods in as the shutters are opened.* EDWARD comes.]

EDWARD: Papa, papa, Ellen tried to lock me in the nursery. Mama is going to tell you of me. I'd rather tell you myself. I was playing with Vicky's doll again and I know it's very bad of me. And I said I didn't want to be like you and I said I hated you. And it's not true and I'm sorry, I'm sorry and please beat me and forgive me.

CLIVE: Well there's a brave boy to own up. You should always respect and love me, Edward, not for myself, I may not deserve it, but as I respected and loved my own father, because he was my father. Through our father we love our Queen and our God, Edward. Do you understand? It is something men understand.

EDWARD: Yes papa.

CLIVE: Then I forgive you and shake you by the hand. You spend too much time with the women. You may spend more time with me and Uncle Harry, little man.

EDWARD: I don't like women. I don't like dolls. I love you, papa, and I love you, Uncle Harry.

CLIVE: There's a fine fellow. Let us go out onto the verandah.

[*They all start to go. EDWARD takes HARRY's hand and goes with him. CLIVE draws BETTY back. They embrace.*]

BETTY: Poor Clive.

CLIVE: It was my duty to have them flogged. For you and Edward and Victoria, to keep you safe.

BETTY: It is terrible to feel betrayed.

CLIVE: You can tame a wild animal only so far. They revert to their true nature and savage your hand. Sometimes I feel the natives are the enemy. I know that is wrong. I know I have a responsibility towards them, to care for them and bring them all to be like Joshua. But there is something dangerous. Implacable. This whole continent is my enemy. I am pitching my whole mind and will and reason and spirit against it to tame it, and I sometimes feel it will break over me and swallow me up.

BETTY: Clive, Clive, I am here. I have faith in you.

CLIVE: Yes, I can show you my moments of weakness, Betty, because you are my wife and because I trust you. I trust you, Betty, and it would break my heart if you did not deserve that trust. Harry Bagley is my friend. It would break my heart if he did not deserve my trust.

BETTY: I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Forgive me. It is not Harry's fault, it is all mine. Harry is noble. He has rejected me. It is my wickedness, I get bored, I get restless, I imagine things. There is something so wicked in me, Clive.

CLIVE: I have never thought of you having the weakness of your sex, only the good qualities.

BETTY: I am bad, bad, bad —

CLIVE: You are thoughtless, Betty, that's all. Women can be treacherous and evil. They are darker and more dangerous than men. The family protects us from that, you protect me from that. You are not that sort of woman. You are not unfaithful to me, Betty. I can't believe you are. It would hurt me so much to cast you off. That would be my duty.

BETTY: No, no, no.

CLIVE: Joshua has seen you kissing.

BETTY: Forgive me.

CLIVE: But I don't want to know about it. I don't want to know I wonder of course, I wonder constantly. If Harry Bagley was not my friend I would shoot him. If I shot you every British man and woman would applaud me. But no. It was a moment of passion such as women are too weak to resist. But you must resist it, Betty, or it will destroy us. We must fight against it. We must resist this dark female lust, Betty, or it will swallow us up.

BETTY: I do, I do resist. Help me. Forgive me.

CLIVE: Yes I do forgive you. But I can't feel the same about you as I did. You are still my wife and we still have duties to the household.

[*They go out arm in arm. As soon as they have gone EDWARD sneaks back to get the doll, which has been dropped on the floor. He picks it up and comforts it. JOSHUA comes through with a tray of drinks.*]

JOSHUA: Baby. Sissy. Girly.

[JOSHUA goes. BETTY calls from off.]

BETTY: Edward?

[BETTY comes in.]

BETTY: There you are, my darling. Come, papa wants us all to be together. Uncle Harry is going to tell how he caught a crocodile. Mama's sorry she smacked you.

[*They embrace. JOSHUA comes in again, passing through.*]

BETTY: Joshua, fetch me some blue thread from my sewing box. It is on the piano.

JOSHUA: You've got legs under that skirt.

BETTY: Joshua.

JOSHUA: And more than legs.

BETTY: Edward, are you going to stand there and let a servant insult your mother?

EDWARD: Joshua, get my mother's thread.

JOSHUA: Oh little Eddy, playing at master. It's only a joke.

EDWARD: Don't speak to my mother like that again.

JOSHUA: Ladies have no sense of humour. You like a joke with Joshua.

EDWARD: You fetch her sewing at once, do you hear me? You move when I speak to you, boy.

JOSHUA: Yes sir, master Edward sir.

[JOSHUA goes.]

BETTY: Edward, you were wonderful.

[*She goes to embrace him but he moves away.*]

EDWARD: Don't touch me.

SONG — A Boy's Best Friend — ALL.

While plodding on our way, the toilsome road of life,
How few the friends that daily there we meet.

Not many will stand in trouble and in strife,
With counsel and affection ever sweet.

But there is one whose smile will ever on us beam,
Whose love is dearer far than any other;

And wherever we may turn

This lesson we will learn

A boy's best friend is his mother.

Then cherish her with care

And smooth her silv'ry hair,

When gone you will never get another.

And wherever we may turn

This lesson we shall learn,

A boy's best friend is his mother.

SCENE FOUR

The verandah as in Scene One. Early morning. Nobody there.

JOSHUA comes out of the house slowly and stands for some time doing nothing. EDWARD comes out.

EDWARD: Tell me another bad story, Joshua. Nobody else is even awake yet.

JOSHUA: First there was nothing and then there was the great goddess. She was very large and she had golden eyes and she made the stars and the sun and the earth. But soon she was miserable and lonely and she cried like a great waterfall and her tears made all the rivers in the world. So the great spirit sent a terrible monster, a tree with hundreds of eyes and a long green tongue, and it came chasing after her and she jumped into a lake and the tree jumped in after her, and she jumped right up into the sky. And the tree couldn't follow, he was stuck in the mud. So he picked up a big handful of mud and he threw it at her, up among the stars, and it hit her on the head. And she fell down onto the earth into his arms and the ball of mud is the moon in the sky. And then they had children which is all of us.

EDWARD: It's not true, though.
JOSHUA: Of course it's not true. It's a bad story. Adam and Eve is true. God made man white like him and gave him the bad woman who liked the snake and gave us all this trouble.

[CLIVE and HARRY come out.]

CLIVE: Run along now, Edward. No, you may stay. You mustn't repeat anything you hear to your mother or your grandmother or Ellen.

EDWARD: Or Mrs Saunders?

CLIVE: Mrs Saunders is an unusual woman and does not require protection in the same way. Harry, there was trouble last night where we expected it. But it's all over now. Everything is under control but nobody should leave the house today I think.

HARRY: Casualties?

CLIVE: No, none of the soldiers hurt thank God. We did a certain amount of damage, set a village on fire and so forth.

HARRY: Was that necessary?

CLIVE: Obviously, it was necessary, Harry, or it wouldn't have happened. The army will come and visit, no doubt. You'll like that, eh, Joshua, to see the British army? And a treat for you, Edward, to see the soldiers. Would you like to be a soldier?

EDWARD: I'd rather be an explorer.

CLIVE: Ah, Harry, like you, you see. I didn't know an explorer at his age. Breakfast, I think, Joshua.

[CLIVE and JOSHUA go in. HARRY is following.]

EDWARD: Uncle.

[HARRY stops.]

EDWARD: Harry, why won't you talk to me?

HARRY: Of course I'll talk to you.

EDWARD: If you won't be nice to me I'll tell father.

HARRY: Edward, no, not a word, never, not to your mother, nobody, please. Edward, do you understand? Please.

EDWARD: I won't tell. I promise I'll never tell. I've cut my finger and sworn.

HARRY: There's no need to get so excited Edward. We can't be together all the time. I will have to leave soon anyway, and go back to the river.

EDWARD: You can't, you can't go. Take me with you.

ELLEN: Edward!

HARRY: I have my duty to the Empire.

[HARRY goes in. ELLEN comes out.]

ELLEN: Edward, breakfast time. Edward.

EDWARD: I'm not hungry.

ELLEN: Betty, please come and speak to Edward.

[BETTY comes.]

BETTY: Why what's the matter?

ELLEN: He won't come in for breakfast.

BETTY: Edward, I shall call your father.

EDWARD: You can't make me eat.

[He goes in. BETTY is about to follow.]

ELLEN: Betty.

[BETTY stops.]

ELLEN: Betty, when Edward goes to school will I have to leave?

BETTY: Never mind, Ellen dear, you'll get another place. I'll give you an excellent reference.

ELLEN: I don't want another place, Betty. I want to stay with you forever.

BETTY: If you go back to England you might get married, Ellen. You're quite pretty, you shouldn't despair of getting a husband.

ELLEN: I don't want a husband. I want you.

BETTY: Children of your own, Ellen, think.

ELLEN: I don't want children, I don't like children. I just want to be alone with you, Betty, and sing for you and kiss you because I love you, Betty.

BETTY: I love you too, Ellen. But women have their duty as soldiers have. You must be a mother if you can.

ELLEN: Betty, Betty, I love you so much. I want to stay with you forever, my love for you is eternal, stronger than death. I'd rather die than leave you, Betty.

BETTY: No you wouldn't, Ellen, don't be silly. Come, don't cry. You don't feel what you think you do. It's the loneliness here and the climate is very confusing. Come and have breakfast, Ellen dear, and I'll forget all about it.

[ELLEN goes, CLIVE comes.]

BETTY: Clive, please forgive me.

CLIVE: Will you leave me alone?

[BETTY goes back into the house. HARRY comes.]
CLIVE: Women, Harry. I envy you going into the jungle, a man's life.

HARRY: I envy you.

CLIVE: Harry, I know you do. I have spoken to Betty.

HARRY: I assure you, Clive -

CLIVE: Please say nothing about it.

HARRY: My friendship for you -

CLIVE: Absolutely. I know the friendship between us, Harry, is not something that could be spoiled by the weaker sex. Friendship between men is a fine thing. It is the noblest form of relationship.

HARRY: I agree with you.

CLIVE: There is the necessity of reproduction. The family is all important. And there is the pleasure. But what we put ourselves through to get that pleasure, Harry. When I heard about our fine fellows last night fighting those savages to protect us I thought yes, that is what I aspire to. I tell you Harry, in confidence, I suddenly got out of Mrs Saunders' bed and came out here on the verandah and looked at the stars.

HARRY: I couldn't sleep last night either.

CLIVE: There is something dark about women, that threatens what is best in us. Between men that light burns brightly.

HARRY: I didn't know you felt like that.

CLIVE: Women are irrational, demanding, inconsistent, treacherous, lustful, and they smell different from us.

HARRY: Clive -

CLIVE: Think of the comradeship of men, Harry, sharing adventures, sharing danger, risking their lives together.

[HARRY takes hold of CLIVE.]

CLIVE: What are you doing?

HARRY: Well, you said -

CLIVE: I said what?

HARRY: Between men.

[CLIVE is speechless.]

I'm sorry, I misunderstood, I would never have dreamt, I thought -

CLIVE: My God, Harry, how disgusting.

HARRY: You will not betray my confidence.

CLIVE: I feel contaminated.

HARRY: I struggle against it. You cannot imagine the shame. I have tried everything to save myself.

CLIVE: The most revolting perversion. Rome fell, Harry, and this sin can destroy an empire.

HARRY: It is not a sin, it is a disease.

CLIVE: A disease more dangerous than diphtheria. Effeminacy is contagious. How I have been deceived. Your face does not look degenerate. Oh Harry, how did you sink to this?

HARRY: Clive, help me, what am I to do?

CLIVE: You have been away from England too long.

HARRY: Where can I go except into the jungle to hide?

CLIVE: You don't do it with the natives, Harry? My God, what a betrayal of the Queen.

HARRY: Clive, I am like a man born crippled. Please help me.

CLIVE: You must repent.

HARRY: I have thought of killing myself.

CLIVE: That is a sin too.

HARRY: There is no way out. Clive, I beg of you, do not betray my confidence.

CLIVE: I cannot keep a secret like this. Rivers will be named after you, it's unthinkable. You must save yourself from depravity. You must get married. You are not unattractive to women.

What a relief that you and Betty were not after all - good God, how disgusting. Now Mrs Saunders. She's a woman of spirit, she could go with you on your expeditions.

HARRY: I suppose getting married wouldn't be any worse than killing myself.

CLIVE: Mrs Saunders! Mrs Saunders! Ask her now, Harry. Think of England.

[MRS SAUNDERS comes. CLIVE withdraws. HARRY goes up to MRS SAUNDERS.]

HARRY: Mrs Saunders, will you marry me?

MRS SAUNDERS: Why?

HARRY: We are both alone.

MRS SAUNDERS: I choose to be alone, Mr Bagley. If I can look after myself, I'm sure you can. Clive, I have something

important to tell you. I've just found Joshua putting earth on his head. He tells me his parents were killed last night by the British soldiers. I think you owe him an apology on behalf of the Queen.

CLIVE: Joshua! Joshua!

MRS SAUNDERS: Mr Bagley, I could never be a wife again. There is only one thing about marriage that I like.

[CLIVE comes.]

CLIVE: Joshua, I am horrified to hear what has happened. Good God!

MRS SAUNDERS: His father was shot. His mother died in the blaze.

[MRS SAUNDERS goes.]

CLIVE: Joshua, do you want a day off? Do you want to go to your people?

JOSHUA: Not my people, sir.

CLIVE: But you want to go to your parents' funeral?

JOSHUA: No sir.

CLIVE: Yes, Joshua, yes, your father and mother. I'm sure they were loyal to the crown. I'm sure it was all a terrible mistake.

JOSHUA: My mother and father were bad people.

CLIVE: Joshua, no.

JOSHUA: You are my father and mother.

CLIVE: Well really. I don't know what to say. That's very decent of you. Are you sure there's nothing I can do? You can have the day off you know.

[BETTY comes out followed by EDWARD.]

BETTY: What's the matter? What's happening?

CLIVE: Something terrible has happened. No, I mean some relatives of Joshua's met with an accident.

JOSHUA: May I go sir?

CLIVE: Yes, yes of course. Good God, what a terrible thing. Bring us a drink will you Joshua?

[JOSHUA goes.]

EDWARD: What? What?

BETTY: Edward, go and do your lessons.

EDWARD: What is it, Uncle Harry?

HARRY: Go and do your lessons.

ELLEN: Edward, come in here at once.

EDWARD: What's happened, Uncle Harry?

[HARRY has moved aside, EDWARD follows him. ELLEN comes out.]

HARRY: Go away. Go inside. Ellen!

ELLEN: Go inside, Edward. I shall tell your mother.

BETTY: Go inside, Edward at once. I shall tell your father.

CLIVE: Go inside, Edward. And Betty you go inside too.

[BETTY, EDWARD and ELLEN go. MAUD comes out.]

CLIVE: Go inside. And Ellen, you come outside.

[ELLEN comes out.]

Mr Bagley has something to say to you.

HARRY: Ellen. I don't suppose you would marry me?

ELLEN: What if I said yes?

CLIVE: Run along now, you two want to be alone.

[HARRY and ELLEN go out. JOSHUA brings CLIVE a drink.]

JOSHUA: The governess and your wife, sir.

CLIVE: What's that, Joshua?

JOSHUA: She talks of love to your wife, sir. I have seen them. Bad women.

CLIVE: Joshua, you go too far. Get out of my sight.

SCENE FIVE

The verandah. A table with a white cloth. A wedding cake and a large knife. Bottles and glasses. JOSHUA is putting things on the table. EDWARD has the doll. JOSHUA sees him with it. He holds out his hand. EDWARD gives him the doll. JOSHUA takes the knife and cuts the doll open and shakes the sawdust out of it. JOSHUA throws the doll under the table.

MAUD: Come along Edward, this is such fun.

[Everyone enters, triumphal arch for HARRY and ELLEN.]

MAUD: Your mama's wedding was a splendid occasion, Edward. I cried and cried.

[ELLEN and BETTY go aside.]

ELLEN: Betty, what happens with a man? I don't know what to do.

BETTY: You just keep still.

ELLEN: And what does he do?

BETTY: Harry will know what to do.

ELLEN: And is it enjoyable?

BETTY: Ellen, you're not getting married to enjoy yourself.

ELLEN: Don't forget me, Betty.

[ELLEN goes.]

BETTY: I think my necklace has been stolen Clive. I did so want to wear it at the wedding.

EDWARD: It was Joshua. Joshua took it.

CLIVE: Joshua?

EDWARD: He did, he did, I saw him with it.

HARRY: Edward, that's not true.

EDWARD: It is, it is.

HARRY: Edward, I'm afraid you took it yourself.

EDWARD: I did not.

HARRY: I have seen him with it.

CLIVE: Edward, is that true? Where is it? Did you take your mother's necklace? And to try and blame Joshua, good God.

[EDWARD runs off.]

BETTY: Edward, come back. Have you got my necklace?

HARRY: I should leave him alone. He'll bring it back.

BETTY: I wanted to wear it. I wanted to look my best at your wedding.

HARRY: You always look your best to me.

BETTY: I shall get drunk.

[MRS SAUNDERS comes.]

MRS SAUNDERS: The sale of my property is completed. I shall leave tomorrow.

CLIVE: That's just as well. Whose protection will you seek this time?

MRS SAUNDERS: I shall go to England and buy a farm there. I shall introduce threshing machines.

CLIVE: Amazing spirit.

[He kisses her. BETTY launches herself on MRS SAUNDERS. They fall to the ground.]

CLIVE: Betty - Caroline - I don't deserve this - Harry, Harry.

[HARRY and CLIVE separate them. HARRY holding MRS SAUNDERS, CLIVE BETTY.]

CLIVE: Mrs Saunders, how can you abuse my hospitality? How dare you touch my wife? You must leave here at once.

BETTY: Go away, go away. You are a wicked woman.

MAUD: Mrs Saunders, I am shocked. This is your hostess.

CLIVE: Pack your bags and leave the house this instant.

MRS SAUNDERS: I was leaving anyway. There's no place for me here. I have made arrangements to leave tomorrow, and tomorrow is when I will leave. I wish you joy, Mr Bagley.

[MRS SAUNDERS goes.]

CLIVE: No place for her anywhere I should think. Shocking behaviour.

BETTY: Oh Clive, forgive me, and love me like you used to.

CLIVE: Were you jealous my dove? My own dear wife!

MAUD: Ah, Mr Bagley, one flesh, you see.

[EDWARD comes back with the necklace.]

CLIVE: Good God, Edward, it's true.

EDWARD: I was minding it for mama because of the troubles.

CLIVE: Well done, Edward, that was very manly of you. See

Betty? Edward was protecting his mama's jewels from the rebels. What a hysterical fuss over nothing. Well done, little man. It is quite safe now. The bad men are dead. Edward, you may do up the necklace for mama.

[EDWARD does up BETTY's necklace, supervised by CLIVE,

JOSHUA is drinking steadily. ELLEN comes back.]

MAUD: Ah, here's the bride. Come along, Ellen, you don't cry at your own wedding, only at other people's.

CLIVE: Now, speeches, speeches. Who is going to make a speech? Harry, make a speech.

HARRY: I'm no speaker. You're the one for that.

ALL: Speech, speech.

HARRY: My dear friends - what can I say - the empire - the family - the married state to which I have always aspired - your shining example of domestic bliss - my great good fortune in winning Ellen's love - happiest day of my life.

[Applause.]

CLIVE: Cut the cake, cut the cake.

[HARRY and ELLEN take the knife to cut the cake. HARRY steps on the doll under the table.]

HARRY: What's this?

ELLEN: Oh look.

BETTY: Edward.

EDWARD: It was Joshua. I saw him.

CLIVE: Don't tell lies again.

[He hits EDWARD across the side of the head.]

Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking —

[Cheers.]

Harry, my friend. So brave and strong and supple.

Ellen, from neath her veil so shyly peeking.

I wish you joy. A toast — the happy couple.

Dangers are past. Our enemies are killed.

— Put your arm round her, Harry, have a kiss —

All murmuring of discontent is stilled.

Long may you live in peace and joy and bliss.

[While he is speaking JOSHUA raises his gun to shoot CLIVE.

Only EDWARD sees. He does nothing to warn the others. He put his hands over his ears.]

BLACK.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Winter afternoon. Inside the hut of a one o'clock club, a children's playcentre in a park, VICTORIA and LIN, mothers. CATHY, LIN's daughter, age 4, played by a man, clinging to LIN. VICTORIA reading a book.

CATHY Yum yum bubblegum.

Stick it up your mother's bum.

When it's brown

Pull it down

Yum yum bubblegum.

LIN: Like your shoes, Victoria.

CATHY Jack be nimble, Jack be quick,

Jack jump over the candlestick.

Silly Jack, he should jump higher,

Goodness gracious, great balls of fire.

LIN: Cathy, do stop. Do a painting.

CATHY: You do a painting.

LIN: You do a painting.

CATHY: What shall I paint?

LIN: Paint a house.

CATHY: No.

LIN: Princess.

CATHY: No.

LIN: Pirates.

CATHY: Already done that.

LIN: Spacemen.

CATHY: I never paint spacemen. You know I never.

LIN: Paint a car crash and blood everywhere.

CATHY: No, don't tell me. I know what to paint.

LIN: Go on then. You need an apron, where's an apron. Here.

CATHY: Don't want an apron.

LIN: Lift up your arms. There's a good girl.

CATHY: I don't want to paint.