

African Nights

a new drama
by Clint Jefferies

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Cast of Characters

- Lady Idina Erroll 30. A British aristocrat and a striking beauty, always calm but fiercely independent and restless, with an insatiable appetite for -- everything.
- Major Effington 26. Upright, handsome. An unwavering believer in the supremacy of the British Empire. He is rightfully the master of all he possesses. Not a bad sort, but a tad self-centered. Very old guard British.
- Mrs. Effington 42. Icy and unemotional. There was never romance between her and the Major. It was simply a convenient match for both. She goes her own way and does nothing that is not to her advantage.
- Kiki Preston 23. Irresponsible, irrepressible heiress. She is sparkling, kind, extravagantly loving and believes that life exists only for pleasure -- both her own and that of all around her. She gives and receives with equal joyous abandon and would never intentionally hurt another soul. American.
- Angelo Vincente 30. A walking tinderbox. Absolutely realistic about who and what he is and equally determined never to be found out. When papa caught him as the bottom half of an unforgivable act, the ensuing blast landed him in the drug trade in Kenya -- about as far away as a Sicilian father with mob ties can send a family embarrassment. The experience left hurt, rage and an absolute conviction never to be humiliated like that again. Second generation New York Italian.
- Jose Evaristo Uriburu 22. Romantic, quick-tempered, brash, impetuous, proud... Everything a Latin lover should be. Sexuality isn't an issue. He is in love and nothing else matters. Argentine aristocracy.
- George Windsor 26. Son of the King of England. Charming, open, intelligent and kind. Already his lovers have ranged from Noel Coward to Florence Mills. He has been arrested at a notorious gay club in London, and served as royal emissary to the Commonwealth countries. He performs impeccably those duties given him as a son of the house of Windsor and has won the admiration and respect members of Parliament while remaining close friends with ex-lovers. Through it all he has managed to juggle his sex life, drug use, navy career and royal duties with remarkable aplomb. But within is the constant struggle between the way he would wish to live his life -- and the way of life demanded by his birth.
- Hassan 19. A Somali warrior. Somali 'boys' headed most Colonial households and were much prized for their fierce loyalty and haughty demeanor. He is quick, bright, knows everything that goes on in the house and sees people for exactly what they are.

It is 1928, Colonial Kenya in a part of the White Highlands known as Happy Valley. ‘White Highlands’ because the land is of high enough elevation to have a mild climate and is set aside exclusively for white settlement. ‘Happy Valley’ because -- unlike the hard-working, gritty, early soldier-settlers who came to farm an often inhospitable land -- those who settled this lush area were generally rich, largely idle, often escaping scandal or boredom back home and tended to make pursuit of pleasure something near obsession. The current Happy Valley set are wealthy American expatriates, titled European aristocrats, and Australian and South African adventurers, with a sprinkling of fortune-seekers, gigolos and con men. All in a wild, lush exotic melting pot joyously removed from the ordinary constraints of polite society.

African Nights is based on the foibles and loves of the young Prince George, brother of both Edward VIII and George VI. Most of the characters, the various relationships and anecdotes, as well as the Happy Valley milieu are drawn from history. I have taken only what dramatic license seemed necessary to adapt the events for the stage and to fill in the various unknowns. The play is accurate with the following exceptions: Jose and George were never in Kenya at the same time. They were together in London, and George visited Jose later in Buenos Aires. Hassan actually worked for a different family in the area. The Effingtons are composites of various individuals in Happy Valley during the period. Nothing is on record about Kiki Preston’s pilot, except that he existed, therefore, Angelo can be considered entirely my own creation.

The Happy Valley lifestyle — invented almost single-handedly by Lady Erroll — largely ended with the scandal surrounding the murder of her by-then ex-husband Joss in the early 40’s — not surprisingly shot by a lover’s jealous husband. George Windsor, later Duke of Kent, enjoyed a successful marriage to Princess Marina of Greece who bore him three children. He died in an airplane crash early in WWII.

The action takes place in the sunroom of ‘The Clouds,’ Lord and Lady Erroll’s Happy Valley estate. The sunroom serves variously as a watering hole, lounge, pool house, and occasional overflow guest room. The back wall is a series of tall, arched French windows leading to the pool and garden, through which we can see only lush greenery and blue sky. Stage L are a set of pocket doors leading to the main part of the house. Stage R are a set of built-ins with shelves above and drawers below. The room is furnished mainly with wicker and canvas furniture, suitable for having an afternoon cocktail, or lounging in wet swimwear. A rolling drink cart sits between two of the windows, a chaise longue near the SR wall can recline fully into a bed as needed. Huge tropical plants abound. There are trophies on the wall, gazelle, lion, rhino, etc. A tiger-pelt rug, head intact, occupies the center of the room surrounded by small tables and lounge chairs. The room is an eclectic but tasteful combination of African souvenirs and art deco.

Scene 1: A Friday afternoon in the summer of 1928.

Scene 2: That evening at twilight.

Scene 3: Late the same night.

Scene 4: Saturday morning.

Scene 5: Very late Saturday night.

Scene 6: Sunday morning.

Act I
Scene 1

(At rise, Kiki Preston, a pretty, vivacious girl of 23 is lounging on the chaise, vigorously filing an errant fingernail. Lady Idina Erroll, a striking beauty of 35, is checking the stock on the liquor cart. Both women are dressed in fashionable afternoon frocks -- expensive looking without being flashy. Standing nearby is Hassan, the major-domo of the house. He's a young Somali with more attitude than most of the ruling class. He is well educated, and takes pride in being attached to one of the premiere households in the highlands. He is taking notes on a small pad.)

Idina

I think at least two more bottles of Hennessy. And I don't see any Green Willow...

Kiki

Oh hell.

Idina

It's all right. Be calm dear. I'm sure there's more in the pantry.

Kiki

I don't give a damn about your booze. Look at this nail! Just look at it.

Idina

And I think some vermouth as well. It's running a bit low.

Hassan

Yes, Ma'am. Napkins?

Idina

Oh, God yes. There are none here at all, are there?

Kiki

It's absolutely jagged. I could maim somebody with this.

Hassan

Is that all, Ma'am?

Idina

I think so. There should be six tonight. What about... Oh, bloody hell, Hassan, get whatever you think we'll need. You always guess better than I do anyway.

Hassan

Yes, Ma'am.

(He nods and exits.)

Kiki

Either you show me some sympathy this instant or I won't tell you a thing about what I overheard at Muthaiga country club this afternoon...

Idina

(flat)

You poor child. The nail looks absolutely ghastly. Ripped to shreds. I'm sure you're in hideous agony...

Kiki

I run this down some poor man's back and it'll draw blood.

Idina

That's never stopped you before.

Kiki

Oh, go to hell. Aren't you just dying to hear about the club this afternoon?

Idina

Not particularly.

Kiki

They were talking about you.

Idina

Hardly novel.

Kiki

Well, that's true. But this time it was particularly nasty. Vicious actually.

Idina

All right. You have my attention.

Kiki

Well! I was going in for lunch with Freddy...

Idina

Freddy?

Kiki

You know... Just in from Australia. Raises wild monkeys or something -- you know -- for their glands...

Idina

I think we can skip this part.

Kiki

But it's amazing! Old Fitzroy went in for the operation -- you know -- having the monkey glands implanted? Well, they say the poor old thing's like a flagpole ever since. Can't get it down for anything. Can you imagine?

Idina

I'm trying exceedingly hard not to. Old Mr. Fitzroy in a state of permanent tumescence? No. Definitely not an image I want running about my head before dinner.

Kiki

Must be great for Mrs. Fitzroy, though...

Idina

You're at the club with Freddy. The monkey gland conversation is mercifully over. And...

Kiki

Well, at the table just behind us was Lady Gordon...

Idina

Holding forth, I'm sure, like a battleship at full steam...

Kiki

Looking a little like one too. No, more like an icebox with feet.

Idina

And you couldn't help but overhear... Yes?

Kiki

She's trying to get the governor to issue an edict against you!

Idina

(hardly holding back the laughter)

I'm to be the subject of a Crown Edict? That's marvelous!

Kiki

Well, I don't know if she'll get him to do it. But his lordship was at her table. I tell you she was beet red. I'll have you know you're demeaning every respectable family in the colony. Making the entire population of white settlers look like -- oh hell, what was the word she used...

Idina

Libertines?

Kiki

No... Something with an H. I remember because I couldn't shut up Freddy, and at first I thought she said you were a headhunter, which I thought was going a little far, even for her...

Idina

Hedonist?

Kiki

Bingo! Let's see... She said your weekend parties turned into Roman orgies. That you were never satisfied if a single husband wound up in bed with his own wife...

Idina

All right. Then what was the vicious part...

Kiki

Oh right: You cavort naked in front of the natives... You seduce young officers...

Idina

My, I've been rather busy, haven't I...

Kiki

Oh -- and your house is a Chinaman's den of opium, morphine and hashish.

Idina

What? No cocaine?

Kiki

And so she wants the estate off limits to all officers -- Oh, and the African Rifles too.

Idina

And His Lordship replied?

Kiki

Oh terrible! Terrible doings! We shall certainly have to...

Idina

Have to what?

Kiki

Not a clue. The piano started up about then, and I could only see their mouths moving.

Idina

Just as well. I wonder where George is, I thought he'd be here by now.

Kiki

God, I can't wait. He's so sweet. I hope he appreciates you set up this whole weekend just for him.

Idina

Well, a bit for me too.

Kiki

Major Effington's coming!!! You sly boots. Is he dragging the battle-axe along?

Idina

Yes, 'fraid so. With His Royal Highness here you couldn't keep her off with a meat axe.

Kiki

How was he when he phoned -- George I mean?

Idina

Awful. Well, what can one expect? They'd been seeing each other for months. He sounds utterly lost.

(During the following, Hassan enters with bottles and napkins, arranges them on the drink trolley, and silently disappears again.)

Kiki

Who was it?

Idina

Obo.. Oobor? Oh who can remember? He's the son of the Argentine ambassador. Jose something... George was absolutely hopeless about it.

Kiki

Poor thing. Lost loves are so sad.

Idina

This one wasn't lost. More mailed away I think. I'm sure we'll get all the details, but I gather that when the ambassador found out, the whole thing got a bit out of hand. Lot's of shouting and broken lamps and vases and things. Well, you know what the Spanish are.

Kiki

You know, George is the only man I know who really doesn't care...

Idina

About?

Kiki

Who he sleeps with. Race... Sex... Martial status... number of limbs... It's all absolutely immaterial to him. You've got to admire that somehow.

Idina

Well, he'd best be content with a white, female, married, with both arms and legs -- as that's all I could put my hands on for the weekend on this kind of notice.

Kiki

I'm sure we'll manage something...

Idina

Ah! A taste for royalty have we?

Kiki

What is he? Fourth in line? No. Not particularly. Just him. He's sweet.

Idina

Yes. He is, isn't he. Or I wouldn't be going to all this bloody trouble for him.

(A chime.)

And so it begins. Ready?

Kiki

Ready.

Idina

Hassan? Whoever it is, bring them out here if you please. Martini?

Kiki

Well, it'll have to do for now.

Idina

This is going to be a good weekend -- a special weekend. I can just feel it.

Kiki

Of course it will. We have the perfect hostess.

(The ladies smile and click martini glasses as

Hassan enters through the pocket doors. He ushers in Major and Mrs. Effington, a handsome couple, impeccably dressed, he in uniform, she in a smart summer dress. While both would turn heads, it's obvious that the Major is younger than his wife by more than a couple of years. Behind them, still in flying gear, is Angelo Vincente, a beefy, earthy Italian with a natural, if rough, sort of charm. He hangs back, out of place, near the doorway.)

Idina

Come in! Margaret, you look wonderful as always.

Margaret

Hello Idina.

(They give each other slightly chilly air-kisses)

Idina

And Major...

Robert

God, you look fabulous.

(He kisses her hand.)

And Mrs. Preston... Grand to see you again.

Kiki

Why Major! I'd forgotten just how handsome you were.

Margaret

Don't encourage him. He spends half his life in front of a mirror as it is. Hello Kiki.

Kiki

Hello Margaret. So glad you could come up on such short notice.

Margaret

Don't be absurd. Robert wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Robert

True, I'm afraid.

Idina

(Indicating Angelo)

And this would be...

Kiki

Oh, Angelo! I didn't see you. Come on in, honey. Everybody, this is Angelo, my new pilot. Angelo, this is everybody. Well, everybody that matters anyway. Let's see... Lady Idina. This is her place.

Angelo

Uh, good to meet you ma'am.

Idina

Likewise, I'm sure.

Kiki

And this is Major and Mrs. Effington -- Margaret and Robert...

Angelo

Yeah, we sorta met already.

Robert

We broke an axle coming up the escarpment. Mr. Vincente was kind enough to stop and help.

Angelo

Well, I couldn't do anything about the axle, but I was coming up this way anyway...

Robert

Don't be so modest, man. Excellent chap! Took care of everything for us. Got right down in the mud, crawled around under the car, told us exactly what was wrong.

Margaret

Robert is hopeless with anything mechanical.

Robert

Pushed it through a foot of mud to get it off the road... Drove us up here. Wouldn't let me give him a tuppence for it either.

Angelo

Naw. It's OK. Really.

Idina

Well, it seems you're the hero of the hour.

Kiki

I knew he was just perfect when I hired him.

Angelo

Uh, yeah... Listen, I got the packages you wanted from Nairobi.

Kiki

There's no rush. We'll take care of all that later. Sit down.

Angelo

Look, some mud mighta gotten through the coveralls...

Idina

Believe me, this furniture's seen considerably worse. Sit. Relax. What would everyone like to drink? Margaret?

Margaret

Gin and bitters for me.

Idina

Robert?

Robert

Scotch. Neat please.

Idina

That's right. Mr..... Uh...

Angelo

Vincente. But it's Angelo. Just call me Angelo.

Idina

All right, Angelo, what's your pleasure?

Angelo

Uh, you got beer?

Idina

I'm sure that can be arranged.

(She calls out the door.)

Hassan?

Angelo

Look, don't go to any trouble. I can drink whatever you got there.

Idina

Don't be silly. This is The Clouds. No wish goes ungranted.

Angelo

OK.

Hassan

(entering)

Ma'am?

Idina

Could you get some beer for our guest Angelo -- oh and bring a couple of extra. Put them in a champagne bucket or something with plenty of shaved ice.

(Hassan nods and exits. Idina continues fixing drinks.)

Well, sit everyone, sit. I decided to make the sunroom sort of our base of operations for the weekend. The breeze is so much better through here than in the main house.

Robert

It has turned beastly hot.

Kiki

It's not so bad. We're so high up here. Los Angeles gets much worse this time of year.

Margaret

Los Angeles is beastly any time of year -- and nothing to do with the weather. So who else is in for the weekend -- You were really quite mysterious when you rang up.

Idina

Well, it's a bit of a secret, so we didn't want to let anyone know until we were all here.

Margaret

Well who? We're all agog.

Idina

The prince is coming in.

Robert

David! Jolly good. He was a first class sport on safari last year.

Idina

No, no it's George. No fanfare. Just a quiet vacation with friends.

Margaret

I've never met him, but of course I've seen the photos. He's terribly attractive.

Robert

Humph.

Idina

What sort of sound was that?

Robert

Nothing. Just humph. That's all.

Margaret

Don't believe him for a moment. I've lived with that snort for two years.

Idina

And it means?

Margaret

That was a decidedly derisive ‘humph.’

Idina

As opposed to?

Margaret

Oh he has a complete orchestra of them. There’s the self-satisfied ‘humph’ and the appraising ‘humph,’ but this one was of the derisive variety. No doubt about it.

Idina

All right. Explain the expletive, Robert. Come clean now. Why the snort for poor George?

Robert

Well, I’m sure you’ve heard the stories?

Idina

Stories? Do tell.

Robert

It’s all over London. Young man’s a royal poof. Rather disgusting if you ask me.

Kiki

Oh, probably just rumors. People love to talk.

Robert

No. I had it straight from the constable in charge. He was picked up at place called the Nut House. Notorious spot for inverters and the like. Dancing with some other fairy. Wearing makeup. Disgrace to the crown.

Idina

Well even if it’s true, what does it matter? Let the boy have some fun while he can.

Robert

Fun? Well, call it what you like, but it's serious business. A small fortune was paid to cover the whole thing up, I can tell you.

Kiki

Don't be mean. He's a dear. And he does fine around the ladies. Trust me.

(Hassan silently enters, hands a glass of beer to Angelo, puts a champagne bucket with two beers on the drink cart and exits.)

Angelo

Thanks.

Robert

Just a cover. Once a poof, always a poof. You mark my words. A real man can smell that sort of thing a mile off. Angelo -- back me up here chap. You know what I mean.

Angelo

Yeah. Sure.

Robert

You see? It's the sort of thing ladies don't understand. Revolting behavior. Makes a regular chap sick to his stomach. Aren't I right now?

Angelo

Yeah. It's rotten. Listen, Mrs. Preston, I ought to get some work done on the plane before it gets too dark. Maybe I could...

Kiki

Sit. Have another beer.

Idina

Well if you must retch, kindly do it quietly and privately. George is my guest and I won't have him insulted under my roof. Not so much as a discourteous glance. You understand?

Robert

Not to worry. I'll remain a gentleman. As long as he keeps his hands to himself.

Kiki

Ooooo. Better watch out. I hear they find uniforms irresistible...

Robert

Uniforms? You mean it? You think I should change into...

(All three women burst out laughing. Even Angelo manages a guffaw.)

Fine. Have your laugh. You'll see I'm right.

(The phone rings. Idina goes to answer.)

Idina

Yes? Hello? Louder please, I can barely hear... Yes. Put him through. Joss? Where in blazes are you? I expected you hours ago. What? The line's awful. Well can't you hire an aeroplane? Well, I must say it's awfully tiresome. I don't care how much time you spend in Cannes, but we do have a house full of guests this weekend. Oh all right, but I hope a shark takes off both your legs at the knees. Don't quibble, perhaps you'll get sunstroke then. Or step on a jellyfish. I hear they're exquisitely painful. Yes. Right. Love you too and all that.

(She hangs up.)

Abject apologies to all. Joss is held up in Cannes.

Robert

So sorry. Business I expect?

Idina

Yes. Of the monkey kind. I imagine he's up there with Mary. Simply couldn't tear himself away.

Margaret

Such pique! Idina, I'm surprised. I've never known you to begrudge Joss his little dalliances.

Idina

Molly? Oh really, Margaret. I don't mind her. But the little bugger's bloody well left me with an odd number for dinner -- for the whole weekend. Mark my words, he will pay for this. Now I for one am absolutely sweltering. Anyone care to join me in the pool?

Robert

Capital idea. I'm in.

Idina

Margaret?

Margaret

I've no other pressing engagements.

Robert

Shall we all go up and change then?

Idina

Go ahead. You're in the East room. I'm sure Hassan's taken care of the luggage. I'll be along in a moment.

Robert

Be down in two shakes!

Margaret

Ah for the energy of youth.

(Handing Idina her drink)

Top this off for me, would you dear? I've a feeling I'll be needing it.

(Robert and Margaret exit.)

Kiki

OK, Angelo, you're absolutely squirming. What have you got for me?

Angelo

You think maybe we should...

Kiki

Oh, don't worry. Idina won't mind a bit. Now did he have everything?

Angelo

(Pulling small packets from inside his shirt.)

Yeah. Two of this one like you asked for. But only one of these...

Kiki

Oh hell. Well, we'll just have to hope the coke's more popular. Hashish?

Angelo

(wincing a little at Kiki's openness...)

Uh yeah. Sure...

Idina

Don't worry Angelo. Relax. Kiki's little party favors are hardly a novelty.

Angelo

Oh, then nobody's gonna -- you know -- mind.

Idina

No one who's likely to be in this house.

(He reaches inside his shirt, but the packet's fallen down into his pants. He gropes around for it, embarrassed.)

Angelo

Sorry... It kinda... you know, dropped down...

(He turns away from the ladies, digs deeper, and turns back triumphantly with a slightly crumpled paper packet.)

Kiki

(an evil little grin as she wafts the damp package under her nose)

Mmmmm. You charge extra for that?

Angelo

Uh. Sorry... I mean, I...

Idina

Kiki! Behave yourself. You're embarrassing the poor man.

Angelo

Well listen, that's all of it. I better get goin' then...

Kiki

Angelo?

Angelo

Huh?

Kiki

Be a dear. I left my cigs in the drawing room.

Angelo

Uh sure. Yeah. I'll get them for you. Where is it?

Kiki

Two rooms down the hall, on your left.

Angelo

Yeah. Be right back.

(He exits.)

Kiki

God! Isn't he a dish?

Idina

All pasta and olive oil. No. That's unfair. He's charming. A little rough around the edges, but perfectly charming. Where did you find him?

Kiki

Frank Williams -- you know, the goodie man in Nairobi? He recommended him. He learned to fly in the Air Corps -- has some New York connections I guess.

Idina

I'm sure.

Kiki

So what do you think?

Idina

About?

Kiki

Well, Joss isn't coming. You need one more man.

Idina

Him? Along with Margaret the Ice-Goddess and His Royal Highness?

Kiki

Are you kidding? George will love him.

Idina

I'm sure. I love him. Who knows... Could work. Could also be a crashing disaster if things get out of hand.

Kiki

Oh come on. Are things any fun if they aren't a little out of hand?

Idina

I knew there was a reason I liked you so much. Very well. Have him stay. But if George gets in his cups and starts making advances on the poor boy, you deal with it. I've my hands full with...
(*But Angelo is reentering sans cigarettes.*)

Angelo

Listen, I'm sorry, I looked all around but I couldn't find...

Kiki

Oh no. My fault. Wasn't that silly, they were right here all along.

Angelo

Oh. Glad you got them then. Well, I'll be...

Kiki

Listen Angelo, Idina just had the most marvelous idea.

Angelo

OK...

Kiki

Why don't you spend the weekend with us?

Angelo

You mean here? Like part of the party?

Kiki

Sure! Idina's husband can't make it. Robert thinks you're fabulous. What do you say?

Angelo

Oh, thanks. Really thanks a lot. That's really nice. But I haven't got anything but what I'm wearing. And there's really a lot of work back at...

Kiki

So I'll tell your boss to give you the weekend off.

Angelo

Naw, I'd really like to, but...

Kiki

Come on, Idina. Help here.

Idina

Angelo. I would consider it a personal favor if you could stay the weekend. Without you my whole table will be hopelessly out of balance.

Angelo

But what about my clothes? I can't show up at dinner like this.

Idina

I think you and my husband are about the same size. You can even take his room. God knows he won't be using it.

Kiki

Please. Just for me???

Angelo

Well, yeah. Sure. I guess. I mean, thanks. This is really nice of you. It's just...

Kiki

What?

Angelo

I mean there's going to be a prince here and all. You gotta know I'm not used to this. Somebody just kick me if I do the wrong thing?

Kiki

Don't worry, we're Americans. They'd be disappointed if we didn't do something a little uncouth. Now... first we've got to find you some trunks. Idina...

Idina

Joss keeps some here in the...

(The door chime is heard again.)

That must be him. Perfect timing.

Kiki

You greet. I want to make an entrance.

Idina

Don't you always?

Kiki

No! I've got a new bathing suit. It's just heaven. I'll be back in a sec.

(She rushes off, excited.)

Idina

Another beer, Angelo?

Angelo

Sure. Thank you. You want me to take off? I mean 'till I get something on that looks a little nicer?

Idina

Don't be foolish. You look charming.

(Hassan enters with Jose Uriburu, an Argentine -- tall, muscular, with a face like Valentino. He has a Spanish accent, but his English is excellent. He is dressed in conservative traveling clothes and a slightly out-of-place beret which he removes as he speaks.)

Hassan

A Mister Uriburu, Ma'am is here asking after Prince George.

Idina

(extending her arm)

I'm Lady Erroll.

Jose

(Kissing her hand.)

I am charmed, your ladyship.

Idina

Idina. Please, Idina. Come in. Would you care for a cocktail?

Jose

Thank you, no. I was told I might find...

Idina

Yes?

Jose

I have been told Prince George would have arrived by now. But he has not... I will just...

Idina

Is George expecting you?

Jose

No. I am afraid I just decided to... I might be called something of a surprise.

Idina

(Something has clicked in her memory)

Mr. Uriburu...

Jose

Jose. My name is Jose.

Idina

Jose? A surprise are you, Jose? Dear God, the light begins to dawn.

Jose

Excuse me? The light...?

Idina

(laughing pleasantly)

Oh my. Oh my, oh my, oh my. The day just gets more and more interesting. And George doesn't know you're coming?

Jose

No. He doesn't. But I'm sorry, I don't understand...

Idina

Please. Sit down. I think you'd better have that drink. What will it be?

Jose

Whatever you are having.

Idina

It's a martini then. You're a close friend of George then?

Jose

Yes. A very close -- friend. You know George -- well?

Idina.

I'll wager not as well as you know him. Jose, I think we are going to get on splendidly. Here's that drink. Now where shall we put you?

Jose

Put me? Oh, no. I could not possibly intrude on...

Idina

Don't be ridiculous. This is a house party. The more the merrier. Oh dear, where are my manners. Jose Uriburu, Angelo Vincente.

Jose

I am most pleased to meet you.

Angelo

Good to meet you too.

Idina

Angelo is another one of our guests for the weekend. I'm afraid the guest rooms are all taken, but I'll have some linen brought down for the chaise here and you can sleep here...

Jose

No. It is out of the question...

Idina

Nonsense. I'm quite sure George would insist.

Jose

I do not know what George would say, but...

Idina

Well then, I insist.

(She takes his hand.)

You are perfectly welcome here. Do I make myself clear?

Jose

Yes. I believe you do.

Idina

Good then. It's settled. Where are your bags?

Jose

(suddenly embarrassed)

I have only a small bag. It is outside... The decision to come here was very...

Idina

Oh, I love spur-of-the-moment trips. Don't you? So... spur-of-the-moment.

(Kiki enters in absolutely ravishing swim wear.)

Kiki

Ta da!

Idina

A wasted entrance, I'm afraid, dear.

Kiki

Not necessarily.

Idina

Jose Uriburu, Kiki Preston.

Jose

Charmed.

Kiki

You're charmed...

Idina

Jose is a friend of George. You remember? George spoke of him when he phoned.

Kiki

Well, any friend of George's is a friend of mine. Join me in the pool?

Jose

I have nothing to wear.

Kiki

But you have to. It's a pool party. Come on. We'll find you something. That's a command. You too, Angelo.

Idina

Second drawer under the gun rack. We always keep some extras. Men's on the left, ladies on the right. Towels in the drawer underneath. I'm going up to change.

(She exits. Kiki is rifling through the drawers.)

Kiki

All right gents, what will it be?

Jose

I always follow the orders of a beautiful lady.

Angelo

Uh yeah. Me too.

Kiki

Mmmm. Well trained. Let's see. Too baggy. Too baggy. Too bright. Here, this looks good.

(she tosses a suit to Angelo.)

And you try this one. And here are towels.

(Another gets tossed to Jose and a towel to each man as she moves to close the pocket doors.)

Well, I'll give you boys some privacy to change. I'll be in the pool.

(She exits through the French doors and out through the garden.)

Jose

Well.

Angelo

Well.

Jose

She is very...

Angelo

Yeah. She is very.

(They both laugh lightly.)

Jose

We had better change before she comes in to do it for us.

(Angelo looks around uncomfortably at the large open windows and finally shrugs. Jose, unperturbed, has already hung his beret from the back of a chair and is stripping off his shirt.)

Angelo

Yeah. She just might at that.

(Jose sits to remove his shoes as Angelo begins to unbutton his shirt.)

Jose

You are from America?

Angelo

Yeah. I guess you could tell, huh.

Jose

You are very American. I mean that in the good way. I like America very much.

Angelo

You been there?

Jose

Yes. New York and Washington.

Angelo

Yeah? I'm from New York. Brooklyn.

Jose

Yes. I could tell. I am Latino.

Angelo

Yeah. I could tell.

Jose

Argentina. Buenos Aires.

(There is an uncomfortable silence as both continue to change.)

Angelo

Uh... So you like New York?

Jose

Very much. Americans are very friendly. Very -- how you say -- open. Easy to meet.

Angelo

Yeah, we are that.

Jose

I was taken to Greenwich Village. Very -- Bohemian. I liked it very much.

Angelo

No. I never been there.

(By now, Jose is standing in his shorts, Angelo has unbuckled his pants, but still seems oddly nervous. He moves self-consciously behind a chair as he removes his trousers.)

Jose

It is very different from Argentina.

Angelo

Yeah. I bet.

Jose

And the American food...

Angelo

Yeah? You like American food?

Jose

Very different.

(Perfectly at ease, Jose drops his shorts and stands naked for a moment, stretching and scratching.)

The hamburgers -- the sodas -- the hot dogs -- the French fries -- how do you say it? Mouth watering?

(Jose turns to look at Angelo. Angelo, however has been staring, somewhat transfixed, at Jose's crotch. Jose raises one rather questioning eyebrow as Angelo's eyes jerk upward to meet his gaze. Two men lock eyes. In one horrifying instant, Angelo knows he's been caught with his metaphoric hand in the cookie jar. Blushing furiously, he turns away and starts to fiddle with his trousers. To make matters worse, Kiki has silently appeared at the French windows and seen it all.)

Angelo

Uh... I... Uh yeah. Sure. French fries. Hamburgers. They're great.

Jose

(With a smile playing around the corners of his mouth, he leans naked against the back of a chair -- almost taunting.)

Great? No, I think mouth watering were exactly the right words.

(Angelo shoots him a deadly look.)

Angelo

Listen mister...

Kiki

(bursting in with one of her wicked grins.)

Oh dear! Oops. So sorry. Didn't know you two were still dressing.

(Angelo quickly covers his shorts with his pants. Jose, still unperturbed, leisurely walks over to the chaise, picks up his swim suit and puts it on

while chatting.)

Jose

It is not a problem. We will just pretend to be on the beach at Cannes.

Kiki

A man after my own heart. Angelo... You're not dressed yet.

Angelo

No. I'll be out in a second.

Jose

I'm ready.

Kiki

The pool's just that way. I'll be right behind you.

Jose

Thank you.

(He exits through the French doors.)

Angelo

I still gotta dress.

Kiki

So who's stopping you?

Angelo

You?

Kiki

Not as far as I can tell.

Angelo

Look, I'm a little shy, OK?

Kiki

No problem. Just curious if yours was mouth watering too.

Angelo

(with an edge)

Say what?

Kiki

Nothing.

Angelo

(more angry)

No. What did you mean by that?

Kiki

Touchy, touchy, touchy...

Angelo

How long were you at that door?

Kiki

Relax, honey. So you were checking out his equipment. No big deal. Pretty nice equipment at that.

Angelo

You trying' to say somethin'? 'Cause it ain't like that, OK? I was just thinkin' of somethin' else... Didn't even realize I was lookin' that way...

Kiki

Drop it, honey. It's no use. I know all about it.

Angelo

What the hell are you talking about?

Kiki

Do you really think I'm going to hire somebody to do -- what you do -- without checking just a little? Jesus, I probably know more about you than you do.

Angelo

Yeah, and what you think you know?

Kiki

OK. Let's see: Your family's in the rackets, bootlegging, women, drugs, this 'n that.

Angelo

Yeah. So?

Kiki

You got out of the Army Air Corps about a year ago, went right into the family business... Then, you rather suddenly appeared in Kenya. Because?

Angelo

Yeah. Why?

Kiki

You're in Kenya because your daddy walked in on some big, brawny two-bit hood, in bed, pumping away, and giving somebody -- who shall remain nameless -- one hell of a ride. Well, when daddy saw who it was underneath this thug, all hell broke loose...

Angelo

Shut up. You shut the hell up.

(He looks almost dangerous for a moment, but then he takes a deep breath.)

Yeah. Fine. So I'm queer. I know it. You know it. So fuckin' what?

Kiki

You know you're really adorable when you're talking dirty?

Angelo

Come off it. This ain't cute. You wanted to talk about it. So what's it to you?

Kiki

You're so defensive. Nothing.

Angelo

Nothing? You drag all this up for nothin'?

Kiki

That's all I wanted to tell you. I don't care. It's fine.

Angelo

OK. Yeah. It's fine. Is that it?

Kiki

No, I mean it. You can relax about it around here. Nobody cares. Well, maybe Robert does, but he doesn't matter anyway. Well and see... I just thought... if you and George...

Angelo

Hold it, honey. You hang on there. Is that what you were planning? 'Cause if it is...

Kiki

I'm not planning anything. But I care about George. And you're nice and attractive. And I just wanted you to know that if you two were -- you know -- attracted to each other...

Angelo

No. You just stop it. You hear?

Kiki

You're getting all upset, but all I'm trying to...

Angelo

No, you had your say. Now here's mine. You listen good: You don't tell nobody about me. You understand? Nobody. Whatever you know is your business -- No. No, God damn it, it ain't your business. It's mine. Only mine.

Kiki

OK. Jesus. Come on, have another beer. Cool down. I didn't mean to get you upset. I thought you'd be relieved. I understand.

Angelo

Relieved? You fuckin' crazy? I was twenty-eight years old and my papa still beat the shit out of me when he found out. Yeah, then my friends found out and they beat the shit out of me. My mamma don't even talk to me no more. Relieved to have somebody here know I'm queer? I'd have to have my God-damned head examined. Africa was about as far away as they could send me to fuckin' get rid of me. Hell, understand? You don't understand shit. I still got some pride, you know, and I was fuckin' humiliated -- down on my knees, cryin' my eyes out humiliated -- OK? I can't never show my face there again, can you comprehend that? Not to my family, not to my friends, not to nobody. Ever. You know how that feels?

Kiki

No.

Angelo

Damn right you don't. You just leave now. Just get out. I'll get my stuff and go.

Kiki

Please don't.

Angelo

I told you, whatever you got in your head ain't gonna happen. I don't do that shit any more. Not with anybody. Ever. You got it?

Kiki

Women?

Angelo

Damn! You just don't know what ain't your business, do you. No. OK? Satisfied. Never done a woman in my life. Tried three times. Can't get it up. That enough information for you? I don't do nobody.

Kiki

Nobody?? Jesus Christ, how do you do it? I think I'd be ready for shock treatments in a week.

Angelo

Jesus Christ. Practice lady. OK? Lots of practice.

(Suddenly, exhausted, he flops onto the sofa, laughing in spite of himself. Kiki starts laughing as well.)

A bucket of ice water helps too.

(Again they break up. The tension is relieved -- somewhat.)

Kiki

I'm sorry. OK? I really am. I won't tell anybody. Ever. I promise.

Angelo

You for real?

Kiki

Yeah. I'm for real.

Angelo

Yeah. OK.

Kiki

You'll stay then?

Angelo

You still want me?

Kiki

You want me to prove it?

Angelo

What?

(Kiki approaches Angelo and pulls him to his feet. She takes his pants -- which he has been holding in front of himself this whole time -- throws them over a chair, and kisses him full on the mouth, long and deep, all the while groping his crotch. He does nothing.)

Kiki

Jesus, you must be queer. That was my best shot.

(She grins.)

Well, you can't blame a girl for trying.

Angelo

You are one crazy broad.

Kiki

Thanks. Here are your trunks.

(She tosses him the swim suit, then leans back to watch him change.)

Angelo

You just never give up, do you?

Kiki

Never.

(He picks up a towel, wraps it around his waist, reaches under to drop his shorts and then slides up the swim suit -- revealing nothing.)

Hmmmm. And he's resourceful too. I like that quality.

Angelo

Yeah. Thanks.

(She crosses to him and gives him another good grope.)

Kiki

Oh, and Idina was right. You are the same size as her husband.

(And with that, she turns and makes her exit toward the pool. Angelo throws the towel over his shoulder and follows shaking his head. The bell is heard again, off.)

Idina

(off)

Go on ahead. I'll see who it is. Oh, just a second.

(We can hear her knocking on the outside of the pocket doors.)

Everyone decent in there? The men were changing. Seems safe.

(Idina slides open the doors and Robert and Margaret enter in full swim attire and towels. Idina, also changed, stays in the doorway.)

Margaret

What did you say his name is?

Idina

Jose Uriburu. I think he's with the Argentine Embassy. He's waiting for George to get here. Probably some diplomatic thing or other. He seems quite pleasant.

Robert

Well, the more the merrier as they say.

Idina

Go on. I'll see who was at the door.

Robert

Don't be long.

(Robert and Margaret exit through the garden. Idina leans through the pocket doors and calls out.)

Idina

Hassan? Who is it?

Hassan

(off)

I don't know ma'am. There was no one there.

(But as soon as Robert and Margaret are past, George has snuck in through the open French door. He is 26 and is handsome in the manner of a silent film star of the twenties. He is embarrassed by nothing and always seems to have a mischievous twinkle in his eye. He comes up behind Idina and puts his hands over her eyes.)

George

Just a masked intruder here to rape and pillage.

Idina

Pillage what you like, but you'll have to stand in line for the rape.

God, it's good to see you.

(she turns)

(They embrace warmly.)

George

My dear, you look absolutely good enough to eat alive.

Idina

Promise?

Kiki

(Appearing at the French window)

George!

(She rushes into the room and throws her arms around him. He gives her a twirl as she squeals, then she gives him a big, wet kiss.)

You big, gorgeous hunk of man, what in hell took you so long?

George

There's a foot of mud all the way up the escarpment. Bloody lucky to get here at all. Took four native boys pushing us all the way -- all shirtless and sweating. Very picturesque I might add.

Kiki

George! You're terrible.

George

No. If I'd done all the things that were going through my mind, I'd be terrible. As it was, I just turned all my thought to lusting after you.

Kiki

Liar.

Idina

Want a drink?

George

Could you just open a vein and pour it in directly? Whiskey and soda.

Kiki

And the drugs just arrived. Best Morphine to be had on the whole continent. You want?

George

Thanks, but I'll have to pass.

Kiki

You don't like it any more?

George

Quite the contrary. I love it. I adore it. It adores me as well. I'm afraid we were becoming quite the lovers. Although David used the word 'addiction' I believe.

Kiki

Oooo. Not good.

George

How in bloody hell do you do it? I've seen you do enough morphine to kill a Rhino, party 'till five and be up again at seven looking utterly ravishing.

Kiki

Just one of my many talents.

Idina

Well don't worry dear, we'll keep you far from temptation if that's what you want. Won't we, Kiki.

Kiki

Well, far from that particular temptation anyway. Everyone's in the pool. You have your suit?

George

Suits? We're wearing suits in the pool this year? I'm appalled.

Idina

Well, give it a little time. The weekend is still young...

Kiki

Ooooo and there's a surprise for you out at the pool.

George

A surprise? How lovely. And from the two of you? Mmmm all sorts of possibilities. Go ahead. Cheer me up.

Idina

I don't know. You look quite cheery to me. I thought your heart was supposed to be broken.

George

It is. I cover it well.

Kiki

Well tell!

George

Same song, second verse - or third, or fourth, or fifth. I've lost count.

Kiki

What was his name?

George

Jose. Jose Uriburu. Argentine. Absolutely divine looks. Actually, he sent me to heaven a number of times.

Idina

I'm sure.

Kiki

So what happened?

George

Well, his father had always been quite hospitable. He is the ambassador from Argentina and seemed quite happy to have even a second echelon royal about the house. Well, that was until Jose and I emerged from Jose's bedroom one morning, ready for breakfast, all flushed and glowing, the pillow wrinkles still on our faces.

Idina

Rather daring, no?

George

Well, young love being what it is, we were quite sure the whole world would share our utter joy.

Kiki

Wrong, huh?

George

Profoundly. You know, Latin tempers are all you've heard. I can now guarantee this from first hand experience.

Idina

Was it quite dreadful?

George

Worse. Much furniture was broken. I was summarily shown the door, and poor Jose was packed back to Argentina faster than you can say 'gaucho.' We didn't even get to say good-bye -- melodramatic as that sounds.

Kiki

Poor baby. But you're all right?

George

I'm always all right.

Idina

You don't look it this moment.

George

No? Well, what was to become of it anyway? Probably for the best. The poor thing was quite besotted with my innumerable charms. Myself equally of his, I'm afraid. Talk was starting. Actually David went so far as to tell me it was becoming a political embarrassment. Whether it ended badly one way or another way really makes very little difference.

Idina

And if you were to see him again, if you ran into him on the street say, or at a party... what would you tell him?

George

(Making light of it, tongue-in-cheek, becoming more and more melodramatic.)

That he was the only man in the world for me. That no lips but his would ever touch these. That I would give up everything for him: My home, my family, my country - nay, my very life! That, having first murdered my father and my three older brothers, (or they would surely murder me) I would take him to the throne of England and make him my queen -- uh king -- uh queen I think. Isabella to my Ferdinand -- An Argentine Antony to my Cleopatra. And as I clutched the asp to my breast -- falling on my sword rather than living without him -- although believe me, falling on his sword is considerably more fun -- No! No! I won't make light of it! I can't! Bleeding, dying, I would cry out his name with my final, tortured breath!

(By now George is dragging himself across the floor and the ladies are fairly howling. Jose runs up to the French windows, but George is too far into his shtick to notice.)

Jose

I left my towel...

George

Jose! I would cry! Jose! My only love!

Jose

(leaning nonchalantly on the door.)

Yes?

(George turns and gapes.)

George

Good God.

(blackout)

Scene 2

(It is now twilight. The guests, still in wet swim attire are lounging around the sun room. All have drinks, and while no one is exactly plastered, they're a fairly well-lit group. Hassan is mixing another round. Mrs. Effington sits with Jose on the chaise. The Major is in a chair, Idina on the floor nearby. Angelo stands near the door, not quite a part of the group.)

Hassan

(Handing Margaret a drink)

Mrs. Effington?

Margaret

Thank you.

Idina

Hassan, I think Mr. Vincente has run dry.

Angelo

No. That's all right. I've had four or five already.

Robert

Oh, you never want to say no to Idina, old chap. She knows what's best. Go on Hassan. Pour one for me as well.

Angelo

OK. I guess another one wouldn't kill me. Damn' I just keep drinkin' 'em down, an' every time I pick up the glass, it's full again. Damn good bar-keep, Hassan.

Hassan

Thank you sir.

Robert

He should be damn good at everything for what Idina pays him.

Idina

And worth every penny. Don't you pick on Hassan. I was lucky to get him.

Robert

Hassan. Hmm. Damn strange name for a Masai. Was his father a...

Hassan

(Polite but with a slight edge.)

I am not Masai. I am Somali. Sir.

(to Angelo)

Your drink, sir.

Angelo

Thanks.

Robert

Well. I stand corrected. Still, Hassan's a rather strange Christian name for a black African.

Hassan

Yes sir. A Christian name is very strange for a Somali.

Robert

Pardon?

Idina

A little play on words dear. Somalis are Muslim.

Robert

Oh. I see. Still, don't know why you'd go so far afield. There are plenty of these local boys to be had cheap. Common as clay.

Idina

Well Hassan is exceedingly uncommon, I assure you. Rather like the difference between beer and a fine champagne...

Hassan

(Handing Robert his beer)

You had beer, I believe sir?

Robert

Yes. Thank you. Haven't had beer in ages. You know what we used to do at Eton?

Margaret

Well, we've heard stories.

Robert

(Ignoring her)

Some of the lads would sneak in great buckets of lager. We'd each take a pint and see who could swill it down the fastest. Actually lay wagers on it.

Margaret

The point being?

Robert

Well, getting tanked, of course. By the eighth or ninth bet we were a fair sight, I'm sure.

Angelo

Yeah -- we used to do the same thing in Brooklyn when I was a kid. 'Cept the rule was last glass on the table pays for the next round.

Idina

Hmmmm. Must be some sort of primal male supremacy ritual. Fascinating.

Robert

You want to go a round?

Angelo

Chuggin'?

Robert

Right! Eton versus Brooklyn.

Angelo

Hell, ain't much of a contest with these little glasses. Besides, I got nothin' to bet. No pockets in these things.

Idina

Hostess to the rescue. Hassan: There are some absolutely enormous tankards in the pantry.
(Hassan nods and exits silently)

Robert

How 'bout you Jose. Want to try?

Jose

The one who drinks the fastest wins?

Angelo

You got it.

Jose

On behalf of South American men everywhere, I accept your challenge.

Angelo

So what's the prize?

Idina

How about... A kiss?

Jose

Ah! Then it will be a fight to the death.

Angelo

You ain't got a chance.

Robert

All right, ladies. Give the combatants space...

(He moves a table to center as the men take their places on their knees around the small table.)

North America on the right. South America on the left. The Empire takes center.

Idina

Your weapons, gentlemen.

(Hassan has reentered with three enormous tankards of beer.)

Angelo

Oh damn. Look at those things.

Robert

Prepare to meet your match, gentlemen.

Jose

Ready.

Robert

Idina will give us the count. Glasses leave the table on three. You take a breath and you're disqualified. First empty glass on the table wins the prize. Agreed?

Angelo

Let's do it.

Idina

Gentlemen, on your mark. Get set. Go!

(The battle is joined, the three men gulping for all they're worth, beer spilling out of their mouths. Robert has fairly drenched himself. Angelo chokes and spurts a mouthful across the table onto Jose. Jose coughs and spills most of his down his chest. Robert slams his glass on the table. All three men are laughing and choking.)

Angelo

Shit!

Robert

(pointing at Angelo)

Disqualified!

Jose

I am drenched! Look at what you did to me!

Angelo

Sorry, man. Sorry!

Idina

The winner!

(She holds up Robert's hand like a prize fighter as he rises to his feet.)

Robert

And my prize?

Idina

With your permission, Margaret?

Margaret

He's all yours, dear.

(Robert pulls her in close and they join in a long -- long and very sexy kiss. George and Kiki appear, hand in hand at the French windows, also in swim suits.)

George

Party games started already?

Margaret

Don't worry. I'm sure there's more to come.

George

(Crossing to Jose, noticing he's drenched, head to foot in beer.)

I've heard of trying to drown your sorrows...

(He runs a finger up Jose's chest and tastes...)

But beer? At least try some decent scotch next time.

(Idina and Robert finally break, Robert still holding her waist.)

Idina

(low and sexy)

You've gotten beer all down my front.

Robert

Terribly sorry. We'll have to take care of that.

Idina

Well I can't speak for anyone else, but I now could use a bath before dinner.

Angelo

Yeah. Or just hose me down. I smell like a brewery on a hot day.

Margaret

Charming. I'm ready to change. Coming -- dear?

Robert

Yes. It's about that time, isn't it. Good beating you chaps. Better luck next time.

Idina

Dinner's in about an hour. I'll have Hassan bring fresh towels.

(Hassan nods and exits.)

Robert

In an hour then. Gentlemen. Ladies.

(Margaret and Robert exit.)

Angelo

I guess I'll go on up too.

Idina

I'll have Hassan lay out some dinner clothes for you.

Angelo

Yeah. Thanks.

(He exits.)

Idina

Jose, there's a shower in the pool house. Will that do?

Jose

It will be perfect.

Idina

George can show you. Kiki? You staying in the pool?

Kiki

God no. It'll take at least an hour for the wrinkles to go away. But it felt divine.

Idina

Dinner is at eight. Hassan flogs latecomers severely.

George

I'll look forward to it.

(Idina leaves followed by Kiki who winks and closes the doors behind her. George and Jose are finally left alone. They stand and look at each other for a long awkward moment, neither one knowing exactly what to say. Then, they're suddenly all over each other. Kissing and groping they fall onto the chaise, George on top. Jose pulls down the shoulder straps of George's swimsuit and starts to tug it off, but George pulls away, standing up, backing off and putting his suit back in place.)

George

Not here. Anyone could come in.

Jose

I don't care.

George

Well I do.

Jose

Then when?

George

Tonight. Here. I'll come down when everyone else is in bed.

Jose

(advancing and nuzzling)

I'm not sure I can wait.

George

Well I'm not cleaning up the mess on the rug if you don't.

Jose

(advancing again.)

That's what servants are for.

George

(Grabbing a chair like a lion tamer)

Back now! Back! Steady boy... Remember: Self control. Dignity.

Jose

(Taking the chair from him and setting it aside, he pulls George in by the waistband of his swim suit.)

Fuck dignity.

George

I'd rather fuck you.

Jose

OK.

George

But later -- Please?

(He holds Jose at arm's length for a moment. Jose surrenders.)

Jose

Later.

George

*(Picking up the beret that Jose has left hanging
from the chair.)*

Don't tell me you actually brought this with you?

Jose

You gave it to me didn't you?

George

Yes, but it was a joke -- a comment on one of your delightfully carnal talents. I didn't think you'd actually wear the damned thing.

Jose

(posing foolishly in the hat.)

You no like?

George

Makes you look like a bloody frog. If you need a hat, I'll burn that one and find you something decent.

Jose

You will have a fight. It was the first thing you ever gave me. Of course I will wear it.

George

Fine, have it your way, you sentimental twit.

(There is a silence.)

Jose, What in bloody hell are you doing here?

Jose

Seeing you.

George

You know what I mean.

Jose

I am twenty-two. I can go where I wish.

George

Not as far as your father is concerned.

Jose

He doesn't know.

George

He doesn't know? You think your father isn't going to find out you've left Buenos Aires and come half way around the world to Kenya? Believe me -- sooner or later he's going to notice. Especially when the bills start coming in.

Jose

I don't care.

George

You might when he finds you.

Jose

It doesn't matter. I'm not going back.

George

What?

Jose

I am not going back. I love you.

George

I love you too, but...

Jose

I know you do. That is why I'm here. I love you and nothing else matters. Nothing. I mean that.

George

Dear God, I believe you do.

Jose

Just kiss me.

George

Jose, your family... You're going to be an ambassador. You can't just send it all up the spout. Come now. Think for a moment.

Jose

Think? I have thought too much. And when I tried to make him understand? He understands nothing. He is too old.

George

You're asking quite a lot of understanding here. I'm not exactly the ideal daughter-in-law.

Jose

He forbid me to come here. He told me if I left I would be cut off from everything. Disinherited. My name would cease to exist. So I left.

George

He loves you. He didn't mean it.

Jose

George -- He hit me. I hit him back. It was very bad. No. All that is over for me. I had to come here. What else could I do? The Ocean is my Rubicon. I can not cross it the other way. I don't wish to. I have you.

George

(sitting heavily)

Sweet Jesus. Jose...

Jose

You love me?

George

Yes, I love you, you idiot, more than anything, but...

Jose

Then kiss me.

George

Jose, I can't let you...

Jose

Just kiss me.

(They do. At first George is a bit stiff, but he soon gets into the spirit of the thing.)

George

You're a fool.

Jose

Yes. For you. Tonight?

George

Tonight. Now go on. The pool house is right out there. I've got to get dressed. You have a dinner jacket?

Jose

And two pair of underwear and a toothbrush. That is all.

George

Of course. What else does an insane Latin lover need? Don't worry. I'll find some way to work this all out. God, I love you.

(Jose just smiles, kisses George on the cheek, and exits out the French windows with his small bag.)

Jesus Mary and Joseph.

(George turns to go and nearly bumps into Robert, coming through the pocket doors. Robert is about half changed, barefoot, in pants and suspenders, his shirt in his hand.)

Robert

Oh.

George

Excuse me.

Robert

Sorry, I was looking for... Just wanted another drink. You mind?

George

Hmmm. That the new dinner fashion? Charming. Perfectly charming.

Robert

Look here...

George

Oh, I was looking. Believe me.

(George exits smirking.)

Robert

You were... I've half a mind to...

(But George is gone. Robert is indignantly pulling on his shirt.)

Bloody bugging poof.

(He crosses to the French doors and peers out, calling softly.)

Idina? Idina?

(But Idina has appeared at the pocket doors in a dressing gown.)

Idina

Robert?

(Robert whirls)

Robert

Jesus! You startled...

(There's a moment of silence, then without another word, much the same as George and Jose a moment before, they are suddenly kissing. She pulls the shirt back off his shoulders. He kisses her neck, her breasts. She bites down on his chest.)

Robert

Tonight?

Idina

I've taken care of everything.

Robert

How...

Idina

The key game. Take the red key. Leave the rest to me.

Robert

You think Margaret suspects...

Idina

Robert! She's not blind, deaf and dumb. Of course she does.

Robert

I don't care.

Idina

I don't think she does either.

Robert

I love you.

Idina

I know.

Robert

I adore you.

Idina

I know.

Robert

Say it. Say you love me.

Idina

For heaven sake, let's leave a little mystery.

Robert

You drive me to distraction.

Idina

But that's what women are for, dear.

Robert

Are they?

Idina

Do something for me?

Robert

*(stepping back and beginning to fasten the studs
in his shirt)*

Anything. Just ask it.

Idina

No. Leave it open

(He does.)

Better yet, take it off again.

Robert

You're rather bad, you know.

(He drops his shirt on the floor and poses.)

That better?

Idina

*(she's looking at him from a distance, a rather
dreamy look in her eyes.)*

Yes. It's lovely. Perfectly lovely. Now your pants.

Robert

What?

Idina

Take the trousers off too.

Robert

Idina, anyone could...

Idina

Do you really care?

Robert

No. Not when you look at me like that. You're all I can see.

(Slowly, almost mesmerized by her, he unbuttons his pants, drops them, and steps out of them.)

Idina

(almost a whisper)

Yes. Perfect. Now the rest. For me.

Robert

Idina...

Idina

For me.

(Robert looks around nervously for a moment, but does as he is told. He stands in front of her, naked and starting to breathe a little heavily.)

Beautiful... I'm not sure I've ever seen anything quite so beautiful. Like a Greek god. Young, pagan, elemental, and utterly breathtaking.

Robert

In your eyes. Only in your eyes.

Idina

(She crosses to him, and gives him the faintest brush of her lips on his. He shudders, but doesn't move.)

Yes. I love you. In my own way, I do love you.

(For a moment it seems she might take things

farther, she reaches as if to touch his chest, but stops. She turns, crosses away and speaks more lightly.)

You'd best get dressed. Or perhaps we could all just come down to dinner that way.

Robert

(Dressing. She keeps her back to him.)

I'm not so sure that's a good idea.

Idina

I just want to hold the memory of you like that. Just like that.

Robert

You don't have to. You have the real thing.

Idina

Yes. I have the *real* thing. Now you won't forget. The red key.

Robert

No. I'll remember.

(She turns to him. He has his pants on now, and crosses to kiss her, but she puts out a hand to stop him.)

Idina

Tonight.

Robert

Tonight.

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

(It's very late now. Dinner is long over, and the party, now all in dinner jackets and evening gowns, are wandering in from the dining room. They've been drinking all day, and spirits are by now, very high. Hassan slides open the pocket doors, and Idina enters, George on her arm. Kiki is just behind, Angelo on one side and Jose on the other. She is solid as a rock, but the men are none too steady on their feet. Robert and Margaret aren't yet seen.)

Idina

Hassan, brandies for the gentlemen please.

(As usual, Hassan silently complies.)

Kiki

This is just how I like it. One man here -- one man here.

(She drapes herself on the chaise, the men sitting beside her. Jose loosens his bow tie and lets it hang from his neck.)

Jose

You have made me laugh so much... I can hardly breathe.

Angelo

OK. One brandy, but then I gotta get to bed.

Kiki

Don't be silly. Idina is just about to start the games.

George

Where are the Major and the Mrs.?

Idina

I think Margaret went to powder her nose. I sent Robert on a little errand.

Kiki

Be a dear and hold this for me.

(From her purse, she is handing a spoon, matches and a rubber strap to Jose.)

And this... And this...

Idina

Why didn't David come along this time?

Jose

What is this?

George

Oh you know. Had to go of 'Princing.' Ribbons to cut, some charity do or other. I can't remember precisely what.

Kiki

(To Angelo, handing him a vial with a rubber stopper.)

No... I think this one tonight.

(To George)

I wish he had. He was such fun.

Angelo

Whatever you say, Ma'am.

Idina

You want a drink, Kiki?

Kiki

No, you know what they say: Never mix, never worry. You remember him and Lady Delamere at the club?

Idina

Gwladys was in her cups, wasn't she. Absolutely terrifying.

Margaret

(entering and finding a seat)

Did I miss anything?

Kiki

Not yet. Just dishing Gwladys.

Margaret

What did she do this time?

Idina

Last October. You were there. She kept throwing buttered rolls at the Prince of Wales. Poor thing kept having to hold up his salad plate to fend them off.

Kiki

Poor prince of Wales nothing. One of them hit me square in the face. I had a black eye all the next week.

Angelo

(referring to the drugs)

Jesus. You people are something. I've seen some parties in my time, but I'm impressed.

Idina

Please, you'll make me blush. Isn't that the same night they hustled old Griswold out?

George

Well, when you offer the heir to the throne cocaine right between the fish and the soup, some people get awfully unreasonable.

Jose

What is this?

Kiki

Morphine. This one's coke. Here, you hold this one. I hate coke. All wound up and no place to go. You know what I mean? I just get it in case somebody else wants some.

(She proceeds to take out a sterling silver syringe and lay it on the table.)

Robert

(Entering with two small boxes.)

Ah, I see the girl with the silver syringe is at it again. You know, you're becoming quite famous.

Kiki

Really? Am I? How fabulous!

Idina

I think infamous is probably more to the point.

Robert

I'm serious. That's what they've started to call you at the club. "The girl with the silver syringe."

Kiki

Well, one has to be known for something. It might as well be for something a little wicked. If this is like the last I got from Nairobi, it's divine -- absolutely divine.

Jose

This is really silver?

Kiki

Sterling. I had it made special. You want some?

(Sprightly as ever, she has put on the strap and is drawing up liquid from the bottle.)

Jose

I... George?

George

Up to you. But I warn you, It'll knock you on your lovely Latin bum. Personally, I'm sticking to brandy.

Jose

Thank you. Perhaps later.

George

Was that the same trip David smashed every gramophone record in the club?

Idina

Well, who could blame him. Beastly stuff they were playing. I fully supported him in that.

Kiki

The best was still Lady Delamere and the rolls. God afterward she absolutely tackled him -- rolling around the floor. I was hysterical.

Idina

So was she. It took two big Somalis to drag her out. That was about the time the conga line started.

Kiki

(She is shooting up.)

But I can't quite remember... Why did they start throwing the chairs through the windows?

Idina

I don't imagine you're the only one who can't remember. Margaret?

Margaret

No, I'm afraid my memory gets slippery somewhere around the conga...

Kiki

Lovely. Just lovely. That's one of the most sublime feelings in the world. Well, maybe second most sublime. Robert?

Robert

God no. Can't stand needles. Beastly things. Can't imagine why you'd do that.

Kiki

Don't worry. I've got a surprise. You'll like this.

*(she tosses him another packet from her purse.
Robert catches and sniffs.)*

Robert

What is it?

Margaret

Let me see.

(She sniffs.)

Hashish? Much more your sort of thing, Robert.

Robert

Are you having some Idina?

Idina

Not at the moment. But go right ahead. There's a pipe around here somewhere... Oh hell...

George

Last time I was here you spent half my visit looking for the damned thing.

Idina

Hassan...?

(Hassan produces a small pipe from a drawer and gives it to Robert. When Robert has packed it, Hassan is at his shoulder with a light.)

Kiki

How about you, Angelo? Want to do it?

Angelo

Yeah. You mean it? Yeah, Sure.

(He takes off his jacket, rolls up a sleeve, and with a practiced skill, Angelo takes the strap from Kiki and snaps it in place.)

Kiki

Here, I'll get it for you.

(she draws some liquid into her syringe. He slaps a vein and shoots up.)

Angelo

Damn, it's been a long time. Some of us can't afford this kinda stuff any more.

George

No some of us can't, one way or another -- he said wistfully. Lovely time though. Tell me how it is, Angelo. I shall try to enjoy vicariously.

Angelo

Good. I can already feel it. This stuff is damn good.

George

Calm?

Angelo

Yeah. Real calm. Everything sorta slows down. Very nice. Or as we say in the states -- dynamite.

(He loosens his tie and collar, then a button or two of his shirt.)

Just kick back and watch the world moving.

Robert

(to Hassan who has just lit his pipe.)

Thank you. Margaret?

Margaret

No, I'm all right for the moment.

Robert

George?

George

On the wagon, I'm afraid.

Robert

I guess it's down to you and me, Jose. Here you are, old man.

Jose

It is hashish?

Robert

Excellent hashish.

Jose

What does it do?

George

It makes you happy. Very happy. Belay that -- very, very happy.

Jose

(moving over to sit beside the Major)

You smoke it like tobacco?

Robert

Right. But hold it in. Like this. Now you try.

(Jose takes a good hit and suppresses a cough.)

Good. Good man. You're getting a feel for it.

(Jose and Robert will pass the pipe back and forth through the rest of the scene.)

Kiki

Oh, I forgot to tell you about Alice.

Idina

What about Alice?

Kiki

Well after the Gare du Nord 'incident'...

Jose

What incident?

Kiki

Oh, I forgot. You wouldn't know. OK Background. Alice had been seeing Idina's husband, Joss. And Idina was being very good about it.

Idina

Well, she was my best friend, I could hardly begrudge her.

Kiki

Well, it's all very long and complicated, but Alice dumped Joss and went to Paris with her new lover and shot him in a train car in the Gare du Nord.

Angelo

Did I miss something there? Shot? Like with a gun?

Kiki

Right. Oh -- she shot herself too. But they're both fine now. Anyway. She's back in town.

Idina

Really? I thought she'd been declared an undesirable alien or some such.

Kiki

Well she is -- back, I mean -- well, you're right, she was declared an undesirable, but she's back anyway, and Lady Gordon is just furious. Old bat.

Idina

I'm so sorry I didn't know. I would have had her out for the weekend.

Angelo

The chick who shoots people?

Idina

Well, she's only done it once or twice.

Kiki

(holding up the syringe.)

Anyone else?

Idina

Everyone set then?

Jose

This is very...

(He giggles a little)

This is very...

Kiki

Fun?

Jose

Yes. Very fun.

(he giggles again, as does the major.)

Margaret

Yes, I think they're set, Idina.

Kiki

The floor is yours, beautiful lady.

Idina

Then let the games begin.

(she holds up a small wooden box.)

Ladies, there are three keys in here. Each one is a different color. Pick one, but don't let the men see.

(She passes the box first to Kiki, then to Margaret. Both take a key and hide it. Idina takes the last and slips it into her bosom.)

Kiki

OK. Got it.

Margaret

Wait... there.

Idina

Very good. Gentlemen, there are, obviously, one too many of you. In this box are just three keys. I'm afraid one of you will be left without a match.

Angelo

Match?

Kiki

A match with one of the ladies' keys, silly.

Angelo

Match...

Robert

Well, we wouldn't want it to match one of the men's...

Jose

Of course not.

(Again, the two men burst into giggles.)

George

Perish the thought.

Idina

(Tossing three keys on the tiger rug.)

There they are gents. No telling which is which. Now, just to make things more interesting. Ladies? With your assistance.

(She passes out four silk handkerchiefs to the women. Kiki starts to tie the hands of Jose and Robert behind their backs. Margaret does George and Angelo.)

Robert

Mmmmm... Bound by a beautiful woman.

Margaret

Behind your back, young man.

Angelo

Look, I better not. I'm pretty loaded.

Robert

Come on now. Don't be shy.

(overlapping)

Margaret

Go on. No backing out now.

Robert

Right man. Have to hold your end up for the good old United States... Come on. The man needs some encouragement. An-ge-lo! An-ge-lo!

(laughing and pushing him forward the other's take up the chant.)

George, Jose, Idina, Robert and Margaret

An-ge-lo! An-ge-lo! An-ge-lo! An-ge-lo! An-ge-lo! An-ge-lo!

Angelo

(fairly staggering forward by now, very high.)

All right. Yeah. I can do this. What the hell...

(He puts his hands behind his back and allows Margaret to tie them.)

Idina

George? Are you in?

George

The honor of England is at stake. And I have four or five whiskeys under my belt. I'm ready for anything for God and King and Country.

(He is tied.)

Idina

Jose? Quite secure?

Jose

Your slave.

Idina

Well then, gentlemen: Teeth only. Three will get a key and the fourth is odd man out. Ready now? On your knees. Get set. Go!

(The men all scramble -- laughing and rooting around trying to get a key in their teeth. The ladies fairly howl, urging on the combatants. In a moment, three have emerged triumphant: George, Angelo and Robert all have keys dangling from their mouths.)

Idina

Sorry, Jose. I'm afraid you're out of it.

Jose

That's all right.

Idina

Ladies, time to show your hand. Kiki?

Kiki

Blue. Very royal.

George

(He has gotten his hands free and dangles a blue key.)

That would be me. Come here my little vixen.

(Giggling, Kiki moves over to George.)

Kiki

Honey, I was just praying for this.

George

(Nuzzling his face in her cleavage as Jose turns his back, smoldering.)

Ah yes. Etna and Vesuvius. I remember them well.

Kiki

Come on baby.

George

'Night all. Be good.

(They exit.)

Margaret

I have -- what is this? Orange. Who...

Idina

I believe you've drawn Angelo, dear.

Angelo

(spitting out his key)

Look, would somebody untie me... I can't...

Margaret

What would be the point in that? My dears, I believe I just broke the bank at Monte Carlo.

Angelo

Yeah. This is -- great. Uh whadda we do now...

Margaret

Leave it to me, my dear.

(She takes him by the belt and begins her exit.)

Leave everything to me.

(They are gone -- Angelo looking only slightly terrified.)

Idina

(Pulling a key from her bosom)

Then red must be...

Robert

Me, I'm afraid.

Idina

Why what a pleasant surprise. So sorry, Jose. May we leave you to your own devices?

Jose

Of course. Good night.

Idina

You sure you're all right by yourself?

Jose

Yes. Perfectly.

Idina

'Night then.

(She and Robert exit as well, closing the doors behind them. Jose stands for a moment, staring at the wall. Slowly, pretty loaded, he pulls off his jacket. He throws it on the Chaise. Then,

more violently, he rips off his shirt, balls it up, and throws it at the door. This is followed by a shoe, a magazine, another shoe, a book, all with increasing fury. He is about to throw a lamp when the door suddenly slides open. It is Kiki.)

Kiki

Has Germany invaded?

Jose

I... I'm sorry. I was just...

Kiki

Nice lamp. Let's put it over here. Wouldn't want it to get broken.

(She stands back and appraises him.)

Mmmm. Nice chest honey.

Jose

Did you want a drink? I was just going to...

Kiki

Kind of furry, all heaving in a rage. Latin men are at their best in a rage you know.

Jose

Yes. I have known a few.

Kiki

Such a waste. I don't suppose you'd consider joining...

Jose

No. But thank you. What will it be? A whiskey for George too?

Kiki

No actually, I brought a little present.

(She presses something small into his hand and steps back. He opens his fist and looks at it.)

Jose

The key?

Kiki

Blue. Royal blue I think was the color you were after.

Jose

Does he...

Kiki

And just to save time, I brought what goes with it too.

(She steps over to the pocket door and opens it wider. George steps in.)

Jose

George -- is this what you...

Kiki

Quiet. Kiki has matters well in hand -- so to speak. First, a little prep. Jose's ahead of you, George.

(She pulls off his jacket and begins to unbutton his shirt.)

You know, you have a nice chest too. So smooth...

(she pulls his shirt back off of his shoulders.)

There now. That's more even, isn't it? 'Night Jose.

(She gives him a little peck on the cheek.)

'Night George.

(She kisses him long and deep.)

Just thought I'd warm him up a bit for you. You don't mind do you?

Jose

Please. My lover is your lover.

Kiki

No. He was last year. But now, he's all yours. Treat him good.

(She turns and exits.)

Jose

So, she has warmed you up?

George

Yes. You still want to punch my face in? You did a few minutes ago.

Jose

Yes.

George

Good.

(George attacks. He kisses Jose roughly, ripping at his pants. Jose responds in kind, digging his nails into George's back. They fall to the floor, rolling back and forth. They come to rest, George on top, panting.)

George

I do love you.

Jose

How can I believe you?

George

Believe it.

Jose

Make me.

(George kisses him again, at first gently, then again and again, with more and more abandon. George is kissing his way down Jose's body, Jose squirming and gasping, as the lights fade to black.)

Scene 4

(The next morning. Jose is asleep, naked on the chaise. George is sitting on the edge of the chaise, quite hung over, with a cigarette dangling from his mouth. Clothes are scattered hither and yon. George stands, locates his underwear and pulls it on. He searches further, then finally finds a sock, bends to pick it up, winces and sits again on the edge of the chaise, Jose stirs.)

Jose

(wrapping an arm around George's waist)

Mmmmmmmmm...

George

Mmm to you too. Go back to sleep.

(George tries to reach for the other sock, but Jose pulls him back.)

Jose

(complaining)

Mmmmmmmmm...

George

Mmm a little more softly, would you? My head's a bit fragile this morning. Come on. Loosen the tentacles.

Jose

What time is it?

George

About seven.

Jose

Seven? White man insane. Get back in bed.

George

Bed? That's not a bed, It's some sort of torture device for Idina's sadomasochistic orgies.

Jose

But I'm in it.

George

That makes it almost tempting.

(He removes Jose's arm and manages to get the other sock.)

Jose

Where are you going?

George

To my room -- to sleep.

Jose

I thought we were sleeping here.

George

No -- You were sleeping here. I was hanging onto the edge by my toenails.

Jose

Sorry. All right. Where are my pants?

George

No reason for you to get up. Sleep. You probably need it.

Jose

I thought I was going with you.

George

Probably not a good idea.

(holding his head gingerly)

Dear God, if the grenades would just stop exploding...

Jose

Why not?

George

I'm supposed to be with Kiki. Remember? Hand me my shirt, will you?

Jose

Get it yourself.

George

I would, but bending over sends too much blood to my eyeballs.

(Sullenly, Jose throws the shirt at him, stands, locates underwear and pulls it on.)

Hmmm. Testy this morning, aren't we?

Jose

We will do this every morning?

George

Do what?

Jose

We set the alarm for seven -- or perhaps six or five -- so you can sneak to some other room? Or in England will I do the sneaking? Not -- how you say -- up to snuff on the protocol for this sort of thing.

George

Yes. Very testy. Definitely an edge to the voice.

Jose

You are acting crazy. No one cares here.

George

Well I do. And you should.

Jose

I care. I tell you what I care about. I care about you. I care about sleeping together -- and making love -- and coming down to breakfast together like we did that morning at my father's house...

George

Oh yes. That was quite successful.

Jose

It could be.

(no response)

Is this what we will do in England? Me in one room, you in another room...

George

Listen, I doubt we could actually... Could we talk about this later? Much later?

Jose

Talk about what?

George

Jose, I'm just not sure how practical...

(there is a long silence.)

Well, I can't exactly move you in to Kensington Palace.

Jose

No? Then we can live somewhere else.

George

No Jose, we can't. I can't anyway. Come on now. This isn't exactly the moment...

Jose

No. No other moment will be better. I have left my country. I have left my father. I have left everything behind to be with you -- to live with you.

George

Jose, I never asked...

Jose

No? You never asked? No. Your eyes did not ask? Your lips did not ask? No. Do not tell me that. You ask every time you touch me -- every time...

George

That's not fair. I would never have...

Jose

What is not fair? The way you have cried on my chest? Was that not fair? The way your nails leave marks across my back. Was I not being fair then? The way you cry out my name when I am inside you?

George

Jose, please...

Jose

No! You have said you want me. You have said you need me -- in all these ways and a hundred more. Well I have answered. I have come. I have come here -- to be with you.

George

You're right, of course. I do want you. I want you far too much.

Jose

Then...

George

That doesn't mean I can have you.

Jose

But...

George

(suddenly exploding)

God damn you. God damn you to hell. Yes I bloody well want you. How could I help it? You're strong and you're beautiful, and you make me laugh -- and yes -- you make me cry and sweat and scream and swear. I want you because you're wild and you're dangerous and you'll go just as far and do every last bloody thing I've ever wanted. And then -- just when I think we're right on the edge of the world you push me even farther, till I'm doing things I didn't even know I wanted. And I want you because I love you, and because you worship me so much you make me feel like a bloody God. I want you all that much and I still can't have you.

Jose

You can.

George

No, you bloody silly idiot, I can't. I AM A PRINCE. Do you know what that means? It means that I'm watched and I'm groomed and I'm followed and I never have a bloody moment's peace except when I'm here. It means that *I shall marry*. It means that *I shall have children*. It means that I shall cut bloody ribbons and inspect bloody factories and march in bloody parades and comfort the bloody sick and lame and do you know why?

Jose

No one can force you to...

George

No, do you know why? Because it's my duty. Because I'm part of a family that goes back a thousand years. Because my father and my grandfather and his father and his bloody father, and his all did exactly what was expected of them. And not because they wanted to -- because they had to, just like I have to. God damn it say you understand. You've got to. You understand duty. You understand honor. I know you do.

Jose

Living with me will not bring down the monarchy.

George

No? Can you guarantee that? Father isn't exactly Henry V. He can't just lop of the head of anyone calls his fourth son a bloody queen. Don't you see, it's not just my life. It's my father's and my mother's and my brothers' and yes -- overwrought though it may sound -- my country. Every single thing I do affects them as well, not just you and me. Hell, I'm a bloody embarrassment as it is. You know how much money they've put out keeping my little escapades quiet? For us to live together -- well it would require far too much, you see?

Jose

No, it would require only a single thing.

George

And that would be?

Jose

Courage.

(George stares at Jose, wounded. And then starts to laugh quietly.)

George

Yes, I suppose you're right. But have you ever heard of the thin line between heroism and idiocy?

(Jose doesn't say anything, but he locates his bag and begins to pack quietly. George stops him.)

Please. Don't go?

Jose

Why?

George

We at least have this. Now. And afterward -- who knows?

Jose

You seem to know.

George

Maybe I can't do all you want. But perhaps there's some middle ground -- some other way to go. We could at least -- try.

Jose

I do not know. This is not what I -- thought would happen.

(He suddenly seems exhausted -- perhaps near tears.)

George

I do love you.

Jose

(turning away)

Yes. I know.

(George turns Jose to face him. Gently, he brushes some hair from Jose's forehead. He kisses him.)

George

I can't let you go. I should, I know. But I can't. Please. Stay with me?

Jose

Yes. All right. I will do what you say.

(They kiss again, this time longer and more urgently. But it is at that moment that Robert and Angelo slide open the doors and start for the drink cart. They see the two men locked in an embrace and stop dead.)

Robert

Sorry, I forgot someone was using this... Jesus Christ.

Angelo

Uh, sorry. Maybe we should...

Robert

(proceeding to the drink cart)

Can't a man get a drink without having to look at a couple of bloody rutting pansies?

George

(tight)

And a cheery good morning to you as well.

Robert

Makes you damn well sick to your stomach, doesn't it?

Angelo

Yeah.

George

And on that note...

(He is picking up the rest of his clothes.)

Robert

Ought to be horsewhipped. Disgrace to his father. Shouldn't put up with it. They don't put up with that sort in the states, do they, Angelo?

Angelo

(with an edge)

No. They don't put up with faggots in the good old US of A. Believe me.

Jose

Look who is talking.

Angelo

What'd you say?

Jose

Seen anything mouth watering today?

Angelo

You got somethin' to say? You callin' me somethin'?

Jose

Maricon.

Angelo

What's that? What's he callin' me?

George

Jose...

Angelo

You got somethin' to say, faggot?

Robert

Look, Angelo, it's not worth...

Jose

Hypocrita maldito. El pato eres tu, y un pato inalfabeto ademas.

Angelo

What you sayin'? You calling me what I think you are, I'll punch your God-damn face in.

Jose

I think you know what you are.

Angelo

Mother fucker...

(Angelo attacks, but Jose is ready. Punches are thrown and in seconds they're rolling on the ground. Both are in deadly earnest. If they weren't separated in a few seconds, serious damage would result.)

(The following lines all tumble over each other, overlapping and covering.)

Angelo

Shut your mouth you God damned son-of-a-bitch. Fucking faggot. ...show you who's a fucking queer. I'll kill you you son-of-a-bitch. I swear I will...

Jose

Si. Pegame pato! Demuestra que tipo de hombre eres. Ven! Rompere tu cuello. Moron. Imbesil.

George

Stop it! Jose what in hell do you... God damn it, help me... I said stop it! Come on, get them off... Bloody stop it!

Robert

What the... Jesus Christ, not in the house. Come on, man. Easy mate... There's no need... Ouch! Get off him, damn it.

Idina

(Entering with Kiki)

What in hell... Well, don't just stand there -- stop them. Hassan! Oh, let me in there. Come on. Stop it this instant!

Kiki

No! Please... Angelo... Jose... You don't want to... He's choking him... Get his arm... Idina, do something!

Hassan

What... I have him... No, stay back please... Hold him now...

(But it is Idina who ends the battle. Grabbing two bottles of gin from the drink cart she proceeds to pour them over the two combatants, drenching both. They sputter and are pulled apart, Angelo held back by Robert and Kiki, Jose by George and Hassan. They all stand in silence for a moment, breathing hard.)

Idina

Well! Usually we don't have the gladiators until much later in the day.

Jose

I am sorry. I...

Idina

No. No apologies necessary. A little diversion is always welcome. Now. You'd probably both like to change out of your wet things. Kiki, perhaps you could help Angelo upstairs?

Angelo

Sorry. Really, I... Just keep him away from me.

Kiki

Come on. We'll get you cleaned up.

(They exit out the pocket doors.)

Idina

And George, perhaps Jose would like a shower. Could you...

George

Bloody stupid thing to do. He can find it himself.

(George stomps out the pocket doors.)

Jose

Yes. That would be good. Thank you.

(Jose picks up his bag and starts for the door.)

Idina

I think perhaps the shower in the pool house would be more diplomatic.

Jose

Yes. Thank you. I know where it is.

(He exits out the French windows toward the pool. Idina and Robert are left alone except for the ubiquitous Hassan who quietly mops up the mess with a couple of towels and exits.)

Idina

What on earth was all of that about?

Robert

I can't say I'm really sure... They just began...

Idina

No. I rescind the question. Far too much to assimilate before one's morning coffee.

(She begins to go.)

Robert

Idina...

Idina

Yes?

Robert

Please... I need to talk -- we need to talk.

Idina

The only thing I need at this instant is about a quart of caffeine -- and perhaps a brioche.

Robert

Please, Idina. You were up and out so early this morning we barely spoke three words...

Idina

I do have a household to run, Robert. The perfect weekend of unfettered licentiousness doesn't happen by itself you know.

Robert

Please don't be flippant. I'm quite serious.

Idina

Yes, I can see that you are. Oh dear.

Robert

I'm sorry. I didn't realize I was so tiresome to you.

Idina

There now, I've hurt your feelings. I'm sorry, Robert. I'll behave. No. Don't pout now. Tell me: what is it you need to say to me?

Robert

*(turning to look at her with absolute sincerity --
all his defenses down.)*

Only that -- I love you.

Idina

But of course you do. Don't you think I know that?

Robert

And you love me as well. I know that.

Idina

Robert, I'm terribly fond of you...

Robert

Idina, I'm divorcing Margaret.

Idina

Oh dear. I see.

Robert

Oh, I'll be a gentleman and let her divorce me. She has plenty of grounds. But she's sensible. She won't make any trouble about it...

Idina

And then?

Robert

Idina -- my dear -- Oh hell, I'm making a mess of this but...

Idina

No. Go on, Robert.

Robert

Well, it's just that you and Joss can't have... I thought after Margaret and I...

Idina

Robert, what on earth...

Robert

Idina -- I'm asking you to marry me.

(There is a moment of silence.)

Idina

Yes. You are, aren't you.

Robert

You will say yes? Please tell me you will...

Idina

Give me a moment, Robert. Every woman deserves at least a moment or two to consider a proposal of marriage. It's quite a momentous thing, after all, isn't it?

Robert

Of course, darling. Whatever time you need...

Idina

Just stand here at the window with me. This is one of my favorite things on this earth. Did you know that? Just standing here in the mornings, watching the mist rise off the river -- watching the incredible sparkle as the dew on the tall grass catches the day's first sunlight.

Robert

Yes. It's almost as lovely as you are.

Idina

And see there -- just before the bend -- where the river's widest. There's almost always zebra there. Sometimes wildebeest, sometimes a giraffe coming down for her morning drink.

Robert

There's just elephant at the moment.

Idina

The rest will be there soon. I've seen gazelle -- right here in the yard. And lion -- so close to this window I could smell his scent. We're surrounded here by this wild, extravagant, breathtaking beauty. I adore Africa. I don't think I could live anywhere else on earth.

Robert

And I would never ask you to. I love it too.

Idina

Tell me. What do you love about it? What keeps you here?

Robert

Oh, I don't know. It's wild, as you say. Untamed -- perhaps the last place on earth for true pioneers.

Idina

Go on.

Robert

Well you just said it far better than I. You can see it right in front of you. It's Africa. Mysterious and wild and dangerous and exotic. At every turn of the road, something unexpected and exciting and terrifying and beautiful -- something like you. You were made to be here.

Idina

Terrifying am I?

Robert

A bit.

Idina

And then?

Robert

Then...

Idina

Well now you're the master of this terrifying and exotic and dangerous land. What do you do with her?

Robert

Why we tame her, of course. We build bridges and cut roads, bring in electricity and telephones, and put in dams and run rail lines...

Idina

Yes. Exactly.

Robert

What?

Idina

And what will you have when you're finished? Don't you see? You'll have changed her and she won't be the thing you loved in the first place.

Robert

No. Perhaps not. But she'll be better. Safe. Comfortable. She'll still be beautiful, but not dangerous -- a place to raise your children and grow old...

Idina

Safe. Comfortable.

Robert

Well yes. Isn't that what...

Idina

And is that what you'd do to me?

Robert

What?

Idina

Tame me? Civilize me? Build railroad tracks across me and wire me for electricity...

Robert

What are you talking about? Railroad tracks?

Idina

Don't be so literal, darling. You must see. When you're finished, neither of us would be at all the thing you fell in love with. Africa won't still be Africa when you've done with her. And I won't still be me.

Robert

But I wouldn't change you...

Idina

But you would. I'm wild, Robert. I'm unpredictable. I'm dangerous. Those are fine qualities in a mistress -- but in a wife?

Robert

But surely, when we're married... Once we have children...

Idina

Think of the things you called me: Unexpected? Exciting? Terrifying? Are those really the qualities you want in the mother of your children?

Robert

Idina, you're not making any sense.

Idina

But I am. Those things are what I am, Robert. I can't change. I don't wish to change.

Robert

But once we were together... Once we belonged to each other...

Idina

Belonged? What a horrifying thought. No, Robert. I do love you, you know. I love your beauty and your drive and your idealism, and I love the way you're always so sure of yourself -- so sure of the rightness of whatever it is you're doing. And in some way I even love the way you're so unquestionably the master of everything you possess.

Robert

Darling, you're being silly. I didn't mean...

Idina

But you did. Whether you know it or not, you did. I'm too much like that country outside the window. You'll try to settle us, and neither one of us will give in easily, I'm afraid. No, Robert. I won't marry you. I'm sorry.

Robert

Please don't say that. It means too much. Please don't just cut it off like that. I love you. You love me. Whatever your fears, we can work them out.

Idina

It's hopeless, Robert. I'm hopeless. I am what I am -- rather too unreliable for someone as fundamentally reliable as you are.

Robert

Please? Just don't say no just yet. Give me a chance. I won't try to make you into some stodgy hausfrau -- I couldn't. I love you just as you are. Don't make up your mind this instant. Please?

Idina

Robert, I...

Robert

Let me prove to you -- you can be as wild as you like. I'll be there right along side you. Just don't say no. Leave me some hope... Surely that's not too much to ask.

Idina

Please Robert. I don't want to hurt you.

Robert

And you won't.

Idina

Won't I?

Robert

Kiss me.

Idina

Robert you're just making this harder...

Robert

Kiss me.

(She does.)

I love you.

Idina

I know. I've got to see to breakfast.

Robert

I love you.

Idina

Yes. I love you too, Robert.

(She exits, very upset. Robert crosses to the drink cart also in a state. He bangs around some bottles -- not finding what he wants.)

Robert

Damn. Damn, damn, damn, damn. Damn.

(Silently, Hassan has entered behind him.)

Hassan

May I get something for the Bwana?

Robert

What! Damn, boy. Don't sneak up on people like that.

Hassan

I am sorry. What may I get for you?

Robert

Scotch. Neat. Thank you.

Hassan

(pouring Robert's drink)

The lady was just here?

Robert

Idina? Yes. Headed to see about breakfast I should think.

Hassan

The lady was unhappy. I have never seen her so unhappy.

Robert

I'm sure it's nothing. You needn't concern yourself...

Hassan

I hope she is not so again.

Robert

Yes, I'm sure we all feel that way. Now...

Hassan

I would not like to see her so unhappy another time.

Robert

Look, haven't you something you're supposed to be doing?

Hassan

No. Soda in that, sir?

Robert

No. Thank you. That's all.

Hassan

In my village? When I was young? They used to tell the story of a woman who was made very unhappy.

Robert

You don't say.

Hassan

Very unhappy. Always she cried, and it was all because of what one of the men had done to her.

Robert

Look here. I don't know what you're going on about but...

Hassan

It is only a story. You will find it amusing. You see, this man had made the woman so very sad. Now she never smiled as she used to. Never laughed. She was beautiful, but even that began to fade.

Robert

And?

Hassan

Well, as the story was told to me, This girl's brothers found this man who had made her unhappy. They chased him, and they caught him. And when they had caught him, they cut off both his hands and both his feet and hung him from a tree until every drop of his blood ran out of his severed limbs and into the dirt below.

Robert

That's bloody disgusting.

And the blood watered the plants beneath the tree. And when the lady saw the flowers that had sprung up from the ground beneath him, she forgot the dry, shriveling corpse of the man. She saw only the flowers and was happy again.

Robert

Well, I assure you that's not how we English handle that sort of thing.

Hassan

But we are in Africa.

Robert

Is that a threat? Are you actually threatening me?

Hassan

(Hassan coolly stares him down.)

You misunderstand sir. It is only a fable -- a thing to amuse children. Of course such things do not really happen. Your Scotch, sir. Neat. I will bring in some flowers. Perhaps they will make the lady forget -- her troubles. Yes?

(Robert stands, slightly agape as Hassan calmly turns and exits. The lights fade to black.)

Scene 5

(It is late the same night. Dinner is long over. George and Jose are entering, both in evening dress. It's obvious that the night has not gone well.)

Jose

Please, do not play games with me.

George

Jose, you are being ridiculous.

Jose

No, the way you have acted all night. That is ridiculous.

George

And what did you expect me to do? Fawn over you all evening? Perhaps ask the table to drink to our health?

Jose

Speaking to me once or twice might have been pleasant.

George

I don't know what you're talking about.

Jose

You were nearly fornicating with her all through dinner. Who do you think you are fooling?

George

I don't need to fool anyone.

Jose

Then what do you call it?

George

I call it doing as I like -- and I like sleeping with women occasionally.

Jose

You like using them to hide, you mean. You must not let ...

George

Stop telling me what I must do. I'm sick of...

Jose

Then stop acting like I am your enemy.

George

So I had some fun with Kiki at dinner. So what? That is part of who I am. You say you love me? Well try loving ALL of me.

Jose

I do love...

George

No, you try to carve me up. Every one of you. Mother loves this part, and David loves this part and tolerates another. And there's some other little chunk of me that I'm supposed to lop off and wave to the world while I hide the rest. Well, I'm sorry. If you're going to love me, you've got to love all of me -- every ugly bit.

Jose

I do.

George

Do you? I doubt that. Look I'm tired and I'm thirsty and I really don't want to be having this conversation.

Margaret

(off)

I believe the last round is set for the sun room.

George

Oh, hell. I'm really not up to this. I'm going for a walk.

Jose

I will go with you.

George

Damn it, would you just leave me be for a minute? Oh God. Look, I didn't mean to... Oh, don't look so bloody hurt. I just need a moment. Try to understand. I just need a moment by myself.

Jose

Yes. Go on.

(Margaret and Angelo are entering, again in evening gown and dinner jacket respectively. She pours herself a drink, he lights a cigarette. His collar is undone, his tie hanging. Both are in an ill humor.)

Margaret

Well, that was rather horrid.

Jose

(glaring at Angelo as he passes)

Excuse me.

Angelo

Yeah, excuse you.

(Jose exits.)

It wasn't that bad. I kinda liked the meat stuff. What was that anyhow?

Margaret

Medallions of beef, and I wasn't talking about the entree.

Angelo

Huh?

Margaret

Huh? To this the English language has descended. No. I meant the mood after dinner. All the combatants in their own corners over brandy. Jose was glaring. Robert was absolutely sullen. Idina desperately attempting to keep up a witty repartee to which you made unrecognizable monosyllabic responses.

Angelo

You definitely need to get laid, lady.

Margaret

(laughing)

Would that I could. I believe we tried that last night, and I'm not sure I'd bring up that particular subject if I were you.

Angelo

Look, I said I was sorry about a dozen times, OK? Let's get off it.

Margaret

Yes. I couldn't agree more. Rather a limp subject.

Angelo

Boy, you just don't quit, do you? Look, I'd been drinking all day, and then Kiki had the other stuff -- what did you expect?

Margaret

Quite a lot more than you were capable of delivering, obviously.

Angelo

Aw, go to hell.

Margaret

Male egos are so fragile.

Angelo

I couldn't get it up. There. Broadcast it if you want. See if I care. Just get off my back about it.

Margaret

You know, in spite of your rather spectacular failings, I rather like you. No. I mean it.

Angelo

I'd sure as hell hate to be the guy you had it in for.

Margaret

At least you're honest. You actually spoke the words: "I couldn't get it up." Not lyrical perhaps but right to the point. I've never met the man willing to let such a phrase pass his lips. And you actually told me I need to get laid. What delightful gall. Unforgivably crude, but undeniably true. I do need to get laid. But I don't think either of us are ready for another go, and Robert's rather tied up with Idina, so it looks like I'm flat out of luck, doesn't it?

Angelo

Yeah. It does.

Margaret

See there. Perfect honesty. Refreshing, isn't it?

Angelo

Yeah, that's me. Honest Abe.

Kiki

(entering with Idina, Robert and Jose, she holds the syringe in the air teasingly.)

OK. Loaded and ready to fire. Who wants?

Angelo

What is it?

Kiki

Coke. Everybody seemed a little down. Who's first?

Angelo

Yeah. Hit me.

Jose

Do not tempt me.

Kiki

Boys! Play nice now. For me. OK?

Angelo

Yeah. Whatever.

Kiki

Jose?

Jose

Anything for the lady.

Kiki

Come on then, honey. I'll set you both up at once.

Jose

No, I think when George comes back...

(He trails off, uncertain.)

George

(Appearing at the French door.)

But George is back and the night is yet young. I think I'll take some of that.

Kiki

(finding a vein in Angelo)

I thought you were on the wagon, honey.

George

So I fall off for one night. No harm done.

Jose

George, you do not have to...

George

Ah but I do. Reality has set in with a bit too much force, I'm afraid. Must do something about that.

Jose

Then I will do it too.

George

That would be entirely up to you.

Idina

Nightcap anyone?

Margaret

What, no games tonight, dear?

Idina

A bit late for all that, don't you think?

Margaret

Yes far too late. Very wise.

Jose

(pulling off his jacket and rolling up his sleeve.)

Hit me.

Kiki

You're going to love this. You won't believe the feeling.

Jose

This is what you want, isn't it?

George

Haven't you heard, I want it all.

Angelo

Don't we all.

(To Kiki, referring to the drug)

Yeah, this is gonna be real nice. Thanks baby.

Kiki

You're welcome baby.

(Through the next, Kiki injects Jose.)

Next?

Jose

(taking Angelo's spot)

Excuse me.

Angelo

Yeah. Sure.

(Angelo goes to a chair in the corner. He sits quietly, but is watching all that transpires.)

Jose

Does it hurt?

Kiki

No. Just a little sting. But then -- well, you'll see.

Jose

Yes. I will.

Robert

(handing a drink to Idina)

Here you go.

Idina

Robert? Perhaps Margaret would like something.

Margaret

Yes. Perhaps Margaret would.

Kiki

George?

George

No, Morphine's more my speed I think. That's all right. I'll do it.

(He takes her kit and prepares the syringe.)

Idina

How about some music. Any requests?

(She heads for the Victoria and begins winding it up.)

Kiki

Anything fast.

Idina

Ragtime?

Kiki

Too old-fashioned.

Idina

Jazz then.

Kiki

Yes. Divine. Absolutely divine.

(Idina puts on the record and Kiki begins to dance dreamily by herself.)

Robert

(to Idina)

May I have this dance?

Idina

(to Margaret)

With your permission?

Margaret

Oh, please.

(Idina and Robert begin to dance -- rather sexily.)

Hassan

(to Angelo)

Another drink, sir?

Angelo

Naw, the coke's just kickin' in. That's plenty. Damn, it's like bein' on top of the world. You ever shot coke, Hassan my man?

Hassan

No sir.

Angelo

You want to? I bet Kiki'd set you up if you want. That babe's the cat's pajamas, you know?

Hassan

(gently teasing)

Ah! It is cocaine that makes you see lions in their pajamas?

Angelo

Lions? Naw -- little pussy cats. Cat's pajama's -- you never heard that?

Hassan

Very little of our African wildlife wears pajamas, sir.

Angelo

They do if you're on this shit.

Hassan

And that is considered -- a good thing?

Angelo

Yeah. Real good. This buddy and me, we used to sneak up to the roof you know? With some shit he'd ripped off his brother.

Hassan

Ripped?

Angelo

Lifted -- you know, swiped? Stole. OK? We was just sixteen or seventeen, but we'd get up there with our candle and spoon and stuff, Tony and me... Damn. It was...

Hassan

The cat's pajamas?

Angelo

Yeah. That's what Tony was all right. He was a year or two older than me, you know?

(Angelo's eyes have wandered to Jose...)

Real nice guy -- always took care of me. He was kinda dark, you know? With this black hair...An' he had these eyes... We'd get up there on the roof -- get high, and get real stupid and start doin'... Naw. Never mind. You wouldn't understand...

Hassan

No sir. I do understand.

Angelo

Naw. You don't. I want...

(He trails off.)

Hassan

It is an easy thing to understand a person who wants.

Angelo

Who wants what?

Hassan

(Who's eyes have wandered to Idina)

Who wants a thing he should not have.

Kiki

Come on. Who will dance with me? Angelo?

Angelo

Naw. I'm too loaded.

Kiki

George?

Jose

(to George)

Go on.

George

You're sure?

Jose

You want to, don't you?

George

Yes.

(Jose shrugs. George rises as Kiki dances over to him.)

Come on, old girl.

Kiki

Mmmmmm. Nice. Very nice.

(The drugs are kicking in and their dance quickly becomes more and more erotic. Jose rises and wanders -- first past Idina and Robert -- then around George and Kiki. He stops near Margaret.)

Margaret

Feeling a bit left out?

Jose

No. Yes. You want to dance?

Margaret

A little pointless, don't you think?

Jose

I want to dance.

Idina

I'll dance with you, dear. Go on, Robert, Margaret needs a partner.

Margaret

Yes, Margaret needs a partner -- dear.

(Idina begins dancing with Jose.)

Idina

Who's leading here?

Jose

I think you are.

Idina

All right. Just checking.

Margaret

Well, one more go-round?

Robert

I think I'll get another drink first if you don't mind.

Margaret

Mind? Why should I mind? I don't think I've minded much of anything this weekend.

Robert

Meaning?

Margaret

Meaning you've gotten exactly what you wanted. I don't think one dance is beyond the pale.

Robert

I told you. I just want a drink.

Margaret

Is the thought of it really that distasteful?

Robert

Margaret. This isn't exactly the time...

Margaret

Go on then, dance with her all night. Do whatever you like with her.

Robert

I don't know what you're starting up about. You seemed quite happy with fly-boy here.

Margaret

Him? Please. A dalliance. A fling. Can you say the same? Well can you?

Robert

I... Margaret, let's talk about this at home.

Margaret

No, let's talk about this now.

(She goes over to the record and removes the needle with a loud scratch.)

Let's talk about everything.

Robert

Margaret, for God's sake...

Margaret

Oh, do shut up. All this crawling 'round the bushes is getting rather tiresome isn't it? Why not just come clean?

Robert

I don't know what you...

Margaret

Of course you do, dear. You and Idina have been having quite the little affair for several months now. I know -- the people at the club know -- the servants know. Everyone knows, dear, so why be such a hypocrite about it. And George. You can stop pawing poor Kiki. You didn't stay in her room last night, and we all know that too -- and we know who you did sleep with -- and here's a news flash from the BBC: No one really cares.

Robert

It's just as well it's out in the open. Of course I'll do the honorable thing and...

Margaret

The honorable thing? You are truly, truly outrageous. My darling, you married me for my money, and I married you because you are twenty years younger than I am, rather too pretty for your own good -- and you perform well and on cue. Rather like a trained monkey. Honorable? No, dear, I don't think that's a word one can apply to either of us.

Robert

We'll discuss this when you haven't been drinking...

Margaret

Drinking? My dear, if that's the worst thing you can accuse me of in this crowd, you are sorely lacking in imagination. I'm going home now. Hassan will give me a lift, won't you, Hassan? When she's tired of you, Robert, just come back home. You're rather shallow, but you look smashing on my arm, and as one gets older, one takes what one can get.

Robert

I won't be coming home.

Margaret

Won't you?

(Turning to Angelo)

And then there's you.

Angelo

Yeah, go ahead. Fire away.

(She leans down and gives him a little kiss.)

Margaret

Thank you dear. You are truly -- extraordinary. Come on Hassan. It's late, and I'm tired.

Idina

Go ahead, Hassan. It's all right. Drive Mrs. Effington home. Good night, Margaret.

Margaret

Good night, dear. Lunch at the club on Tuesday?

Idina

Of course.

(Margaret exits.)

Well, this is all rather awkward.

Kiki

I just want to dance.

Idina

And so you shall. I leave the rest of you to your own devices. No party games tonight.

(Idina puts the record back on, and George and Kiki begin to dance again.)

Kiki

Come on, honey. Just dance with me.

Robert

I'm not going back, you know. I mean it.

Idina

We'll work all of that out in the morning, dear. But now...

(she kisses him.)

Robert

I love you. Say yes to me.

Idina

Tomorrow. I'll give you your answer tomorrow. Let's just have tonight. Yes?

Robert

I'll do whatever you say.

Idina

She's right. You are incredibly beautiful.

Robert

That's not all I am. There's more to me. You know that, don't you?

Idina

(rather sadly)

Yes. I know it, love. Much more. Come along. Good night, all.

(They exit. George and Kiki have continued their erotic dance. Jose stands, stoned, watching them. Silently, he begins to leave. At the door he turns. He crosses back to them and stands very near, reaching out his arms to touch both. They draw him into the dance. Hands begin to wander. George kisses Kiki, then he kisses Jose, then Kiki again. George then pulls away slightly and takes Jose's face in his hands.)

George

Is this really what you want?

Jose

No. This is how much I love you.

(George's face is a mask. He begins to unbutton Jose's shirt. Jose reaches up and does likewise to him. Bare-chested now, they kiss as Kiki dances dreamily behind them. George then turns to Kiki. Gently, he puts his arms around her and unfastens the back of her dress. The top falls away. Her breasts bare now, she reaches up to George and takes his head in her hands. They press together and kiss deeply. George then turns her to face Jose. He stands behind her. Jose touches her shoulders. He looks pleadingly at George. From behind Kiki, George raises her arms, holding them out to Jose. Jose takes a deep breath and presses himself against Kiki. He starts to kiss her, then wrenches away, defeated. His voice is tight, but he holds his emotions in check.)

Go on.

George

Jose, I...

Jose

Do what you want. Go on.

Kiki

Maybe I should...

George

I told you. I'm a bad risk.

Jose

I know you are. You do what you feel you must.

George

You're leaving then?

Jose

No. I'll still be here.

George

You're a fool.

Jose

I know. Go on. Get out.

George

(to Kiki)

Come on, love.

(He turns back to Jose.)

I do love you.

Jose

Yes. I know.

(George and Kiki exit together. Jose stands, stoned and weaving. He staggers toward the door, looks after the departing couple, then closes the door, turns and leans on it, breathing heavily.)

Angelo

You're not a fool you're an ass.

Jose

(Jumping about a foot.)

Puneta!

Angelo

Right here...

Jose

You were watching...

Angelo

Couldn't get up. Too fucking stoned.

(He starts to laugh.)

Can't do anything. Just watch. Ain't that life in a nutshell. Can't do nothing but watch.

(He is losing it. His laughter is getting almost out of control.)

Jose

Hijo de perra! Stop it. I tell you stop it.

Angelo

Yeah? Make me.

Jose

Maricon. Get out.

Angelo

(Something may have snapped in Angelo. He looks almost crazed...)

Yeah? Maricon am I? Wanna finish what we started this morning?

(He is staggering forward.)

Jose

I said get out.

Angelo

Faggot.

Jose

Yes. I am a faggot. And you? What are you?

Angelo

*(Angelo can barely stand, but he keeps
advancing.)*

Yeah? What am I? You gonna tell me what I am?

Jose

You are not worth...

Angelo

Fuckin' pussy.

Jose

Shut up.

Angelo

Fairy.

Jose

I said to...

Angelo

Queenie.

Jose

I am warning..

Angelo

He's up there doing her.

Jose

You get out before I kill you

Angelo

Kill me? COME ON!

You not woman enough to keep him?

(Jose backhands Angelo -- hard.)

Jose

SHUT UP!

Angelo

FUCKIN' HIT ME, FAGGOT!

(Jose does. He decks Angelo, who goes down hard. Angelo starts to get up, but Jose dives on top of him. They roll on the floor, yelling and punching and kicking, furniture is overturned as they rip at each other, but it is no match. Angelo is too far gone -- or perhaps he's not even trying... Soon Jose is on top of him, a knee in his stomach, smashing Angelo in the face over and over. Jose bellows with each punch...)

Jose

Shut it... I said shut it... Shut up...

(At the same time, Angelo is weakly trying to fend off the blows...)

Angelo

OK. Stop it. Shit... Please... Please? Please...

(Angelo tries to raise himself after each blow -- almost as if begging to be hit again. Finally, Jose stops. He sits atop Angelo, spent, breathing hard. Angelo raises his head up, pleading -- although for what, even he is not quite sure.)

Please?

(Their eyes lock for a moment. Suddenly there's no question as to exactly what Angelo wants. Jose, half horrified, half turned-on, rips his gaze away and staggers to his feet.)

Jose

No. Go on. Get out.

(Jose turns and starts to walk away, but Angelo rises, his shirt is ripped and hanging off one arm. Blood is trickling from his mouth. He

tackles Jose from behind. Both men fall, rolling again. Jose twists, pinned against Angelo's chest. Angelo grabs Jose by the hair and kisses him roughly. Jose is struggling to get away.)

No -- Carajo... Get off me...

Angelo

Tell me you don't want it.

(He kisses him again. Hard. Again Jose tries to pull away.)

Jose

No. I..

Angelo

Tell me you don't want it.

Jose

Please...

Angelo

Frojo.

Jose

Don't...

Angelo

Frojo.

Jose

Maricon.

(Angelo kisses him. They are struggling again now -- but for supremacy of a different sort. They roll, locked together as the lights fade to black.)

Scene 6

(The next morning. Bright sunlight streams through the windows. Angelo and Jose are tangled together on the floor asleep, naked, with the tiger rug draped across them. The pocket door opens and George and Kiki enter the room, both with towels, ready for a swim. They stop, agape, staring at the pair on the floor. The noise awakens Jose. He looks up, squinting. He has a black eye which he touches gingerly.)

Jose

Uh... Good morning.

(George puts a chair upright, and sits, staring at the men.)

George

Oh my God...

Jose

(Shaking Angelo gently)

Angelo. Uh... You had better wake up...

(Angelo, who's face has been buried in Jose's neck, looks up groggily. He has a cut over one eye and a split lip. He looks at George and Kiki)

Angelo

Oh shit.

George

Rough night, boys?

Jose

Please. Just give me my pants.

George

(holding up two pairs of underwear.)

Hmmmm. These -- or these.

Angelo

Uh. Both.

(George passes the garments to the men. Jose slips into his under the rug. Angelo rises, taking the rug with him to cover himself.)

Jose

Thank you.

George

Don't mention it.

Angelo

Uh... I better get dressed...

(He starts to move, but has a bit of a limp.)

Oh shit.

George

Hmmmm. Very rough night.

Angelo

Aw, shut up.

(He quickly gathers the rest of his clothes and makes a hasty exit.)

Kiki

Uh... I'll be out at the pool. See ya later.

(She exits through the French doors. Jose is dressing.)

George

I am -- for once -- speechless.

(A pause)

My God what a shiner. No. I will subdue my raging curiosity...

Jose

Not so speechless.

George

I'm sorry about last night.

Jose

Yes. So am I.

George

Got rather out of hand with the three of us.

(He takes another look at Jose's black eye.)

Looks like it got a little out of hand with the two of you too.

Jose

Yes. A little.

(There is a silence, then they speak at the same time.)

George

Jose

Look, I'd still like to see if we can't...

Do you think we could possibly start...

George

Sorry, go on.

Jose

No, you...

George

Jose, I didn't sleep with Kiki last night.

Jose

You don't have to...

George

No. I don't have to. I wanted you to know. I mean we slept together, but that was all. You understand?

Jose

You were too drunk?

George

No. I couldn't stop thinking about -- you.

Jose

I see. I am sorry about Angelo

George

Don't be. You had every right...

Jose

I didn't do it because...

George

It doesn't matter. I acted like an ass last night. I'm surprised you're still here.

Jose

You want me to be here?

George

Yes. Yes I do. Very much. You are...

Jose

I am -- what?

George

It's useless -- all of it. You are -- everything -- to me.

Jose

(It is everything he has wanted to hear.)

Yes. Just hold me.

George

Dear God... Just stay with me? Please?

Jose

Yes. Yes. Always.

(But they are interrupted by Hassan's who has

entered with a box of bar supplies.)

Hassan

Excuse me sirs. I was going to...

George

If you could wait just a moment.

Jose

No. It's all right. I need to wash up a bit anyway.

George

All right. No rush. I'll be here.

Hassan

(moving to the drink cart as Jose exits to the pool house)

Excuse me, sir.

(He begins righting furniture, picking up broken odds and ends, a ripped shirt...)

George

Dear God, what must you think of all of this?

Hassan

Sir?

George

Rhetorical, I suppose. I was just asking what you must think of all of this?

Hassan

I do not understand.

George

I suspect you understand a good deal. You see everything that happens around here, don't you?

Hassan

Yes sir.

George

And what do you think of it all. I mean -- what do you think of us -- the English. Come now -- honestly.

Hassan

What am I to say?

George

Say what you really think. I'm curious.

Hassan

I do not know what to think. I only do my duty.

George

Your duty? And that is...

Hassan

To the Lady Idina, of course. I would do anything for her.

George

And for the rest of us?

(silence)

Well?

Hassan

There are Somali's like me who ask, "When will we have Africa for the Africans?" But I tell them not to worry -- it will come sooner than they think.

George

And the reason being?

(no reply)

Come now -- why do you think we British will muck up Africa?

Hassan

(a small gesture as if to say, "look around you.")

You have eyes? These are the people who would rule us?

George

(with a rueful little laugh)

Good God, are we that appalling? Yes I suppose we are. How should we behave then? You say your duty is to the Lady Idina. I wish I was so bloody sure what mine was.

Hassan

You are a prince?

George

Yes.

Hassan

You will be king some day?

George

Not me. My brother, David.

Hassan

Then it is not for me to tell you your duty.

George

No. I suppose it's not.

(Jose enters again, looking slightly fresher.)

Jose

That is better.

Hassan

I will come back later.

(He exits.)

George

You look better.

Jose

I wish I felt better.

George

You will.

(He gives Jose a little kiss.)

You'd better pack.

Jose

You are sending me away.

George

Yes.

Jose

It was Angelo? Because of Angelo?

George

No -- good God no. I'd have some nerve, wouldn't I.

Jose

Then why?

George

It's because of me.

Jose

I don't understand.

George

You don't have to. You just have to go.

Jose

No. Tell me.

George

There are things I have to do. I have -- dare I say it -- responsibilities. You would just be in the way. I'm afraid that's simply the way it is. There's no kind way to say it.

Jose

But just a moment ago you said... We can't...

George

No. We can't.

Jose

Yes. I had better go, then.

George

I do love you, you know.

Jose

I know. But not enough.

George

No. Don't think that. I love you far too much.

Jose

Too much?

George

I could never give you -- everything. And I couldn't bear giving you anything less. Do you understand?

Jose

No.

George

I'm sorry then.

Jose

Yes. I am sorry too.

George

Look, are you going to be... Where will you...

Idina

(Entering in a wrapper, obviously upset. She is followed by the Major in trousers and a dressing gown.)

I told you, darling, I'll give you an answer -- just please, not right now. Morning all.

Robert

We both feel the same. Don't torture me.

Idina

Please, Robert. You don't know what you're asking. You don't really want...

George

I'd better go. I... I can drive you into town later.

(Jose turns his back and does not answer.)

Idina

Surely you're not leaving, Jose...

Robert

But of course I know what I want my pet...

Idina

Hair of the dog, anyone? Hassan...

(She calls out the door.)

Kiki? Come on in, we're making Bloody Marys.

Robert

Yes, come in Kiki, You think I'm not really sure? Then let me say it in front of everybody.

(Kiki has entered just inside the French windows.)

Idina

Robert -- please -- no.

Angelo

(entering in the clothes he arrived in.)

Look, I'm taking off. I just wanted to... Sorry, am I interrupting...

Robert

No. Angelo, Kiki, everyone... I want you all to hear this. I love this woman. I want to spend my life with her. I want to raise a family with her. And I want you all as witnesses. Please, Idina -- will you marry me?

Idina

But Robert, I am married.

Robert

Joss won't make a fuss. God knows Margaret won't. Trust me -- I won't take no for an answer. Let's run away. Now. This moment. We'll get away from all of this.

Idina

But there's nothing here I want to get away from.

Robert

You love me?

Idina

Yes, of course, but...

Robert

Then say the word, and you'll belong to me forever.

Idina

Robert... please...

Robert

No more dallying. Everyone's waiting. Say it. Give me your answer.

Idina

Robert, I'm sorry. Then, I must say no. You know I must now...

Robert

Then I won't believe it. I won't hear it. It's just a woman's foolish fears. A woman doesn't know what she wants -- not really -- not 'till she's married and settled and... Idina...

Idina

Hassan?

Hassan

(Who has entered quietly near the door.)

Yes Ma'am.

Idina

Come here.

Hassan

Yes ma'am.

Idina

Such a foolish hat. Get rid of it, would you?

Hassan

Yes, Ma'am.

Idina

And the vest too. Awful thing. Makes you look ridiculous. Take it off. Now.

Hassan

(He has locked eyes with her.)

Yes ma'am.

Robert

Idina -- what are you... come on now...

Idina

And the shirt Hassan -- you didn't wear those before the English came, did you?

Hassan

(already beginning to slowly unbutton it.)

No. Ma'am.

Robert

Idina. Stop it. I mean it. Stop it this moment.

(Hassan drops his shirt to the floor. Idina stands staring at him.)

Idina

The rest. For me.

(In silence, Hassan kicks off his shoes. His eyes still locked to Idina's, he lets his pants drop and steps out of them. He is stands only in a skimpy linen undergarment. He hesitates.)

Robert

For God's sake, Idina...

(Idina nods at Hassan. He drops the last of his clothing and stands naked in front of her.)

Idina

You look beautiful, do you know that? Dark and mysterious and dangerous like some ancient African God.

Robert

Idina? Please?

Idina

(she lets the robe fall from her shoulders and stands naked as well.)

Would you care to join me for a swim, Hassan?

Hassan

Yes, ma'am.

Idina

Kiki? George? Angelo?

Kiki

Sure. Whatever you say, honey.

(Idina starts to go, but turns again.)

Idina

Are you coming, Robert?

Robert

No.

Idina

We all have to act according to our nature, darling. I am sorry.

(She turns and leaves, followed by Hassan and Kiki. George begins to follow.)

Jose

George?

George

Have a safe trip.

(He gives a wink, a little smile and exits.)

Robert

I guess that's it, then.

Jose

Yes. I guess it is.

(Robert may be close to tears, but he's trying to cover. He picks up Idina's discarded robe and starts fiddling with it.)

Robert

Looks like you two have been at it again.

Angelo

Yeah. You could say that.

Robert

Damn fool thing to do -- getting in a row like that. Damned poof's not worth the trouble.

Jose

I had better go.

Angelo

No. Just a second. Listen, Robert. You ought to be careful about sayin' shit like that.

Jose

You don't have to...

Robert

What?

Angelo

Yeah. I do. I'm just sayin' you oughta watch what you're sayin. You never know who you might be talkin' about, you know?

Robert

What are you... Are you tryin' to...

Angelo

I'm not sayin' nothing. You just shouldn't insult... people. Like my buddy here. OK?

Robert

(Suddenly angry at the world)

What the hell are you saying? Are you... You know how I feel about that sort of...

Angelo

I guess people just gotta do what's in their nature, like the lady said. You understand?

Robert

No. I don't. It seems today I don't understand anything.

Angelo

Yeah.

Robert

Don't understand her. Don't understand you -- people. Don't bloody understand anything.

(He is gone.)

Angelo

Look, I gotta go too. You gonna be all right?

(Jose just shrugs.)

Where you gonna go?

Jose

I don't know.

Angelo

I got some room -- I mean if you want -- I mean if you need a place for a few days...

Jose

I don't think I could take very many nights like the last one.

Angelo

No. Me neither. I guess I got -- you know -- a few things I gotta work out for myself.

Jose

Yes. To put it mildly.

Angelo

Yeah. I know. I, uh... I gotta check on the plane. Look, if you need to get back down to the coast I'll be takin' her up anyway...

Jose

No. Thank you. I can manage.

Angelo

Come on. I mean I kinda been an asshole. At least let me give you a lift.

Jose

No more...?

(He makes boxing motions.)

Angelo

No. No more...

(There is suddenly a little twinkle in his eye.)

I mean not unless you want to...

Jose

You are a very sick man. Do you know that?

Angelo

Yeah. I know. Come on.

(On the way out, Angelo clumsily starts to put an arm on Jose's shoulder, then thinks better of it. They leave. The stage is vacant for a moment, then Kiki enters through the French doors. George is behind her.)

Kiki

It's all right. Everybody's gone.

George

You're sure?

Kiki

Uh huh.

George

Thank God.

Kiki

Sure you're not up for a swim?

George

A little early in the day put the crown jewels on exhibit, don't you think? No. I'm sure.

Kiki

You OK, baby?

(George just shakes his head.)

You want something? Drink? Drugs?

George

No. Thank you.

Kiki

Well, you change your mind, I left my kit on the shelf last night.

George

Thanks. I just need a minute by myself.

Kiki

OK. You know I love you honey.

(She gives him a little kiss.)

George

Thanks. I mean it. Thank you.

(Kiki gives him a sad little smile and exits. George stands in the middle of the room, looking lost. Finally, he takes a deep breath, and walks to the phone -- rather in the manner one of his ancestors might have walked to the block. He turns the crank.)

Yes. Nairobi please, the number is 326.

(He lights a cigarette as he waits.)

Yes? Hello? Regg, is that you? Listen, set me up an aeroplane out tomorrow, would you? Yes, Cairo then London. I'm leaving a little earlier than expected. Something came up. Yes, duty calls as you say. Thanks.

(He hangs up and wanders, aimlessly for a moment, then he stops and looks down. From behind the chaise, he picks up the beret Jose was wearing when he arrived.)

According to our nature.

(He gives a mirthless laugh that turns into something closer to a sob. Angrily, he wads the beret into a ball and hurls it across the room.)

God damn it. God damn it all to hell.

(He turns and heads for the shelves. A moment's search reveals Kiki's syringe kit. He begins to remove the paraphernalia, his hands shaking slightly. He inserts the needle into the bottle, draws out morphine and stares at the syringe. Then, slowly, he puts it on the table. He goes to the Victoria and puts on a record.)

As the music plays, he picks up Jose's beret. He holds it to his cheek for a moment and then sets it on the table, beside the syringe. He stands, looking at both of them then he turns and walks away. Much against his will, he is crying now. He leans against the wall, valiantly trying to choke back the sobs as the lights fade to black.)