HARRY. Who's there?
JOSHUA. Only me, sir.
HARRY. Got a gun now have you?
JOSHUA. Yes sir.
HARRY. Where's Clive?
JOSHUA. Going round the boundaries sir.
HARRY. Have you checked there's nobody in the barns?
JOSHUA. Yes sir.
HARRY. Shall we go in a barn and fuck? It's not an order.
JOSHUA. That's all right, yes.

(THEY go off)

ACT I
Scene 2

An open space some distance from the house.

CLIVE. Why? Why?
MRS. SAUNDERS. Don't fuss, Clive, it makes you sweat.
CLIVE. Why ride off now? Sweat, you would sweat if you were in love with somebody as disgustingly capricious as you are. You will be shot with poisoned arrows. You will miss the picnic. Somebody will notice I came after you.
MRS. SAUNDERS. I didn't want you to come after me.
CLIVE. You will be raped by cannibals.

MRS. S. I just wanted to get out of your house.
CLIVE. My God, what women put us through, cruel, cruel, I think you are the sort of woman who would enjoy whipping somebody. I've never met one before.
MRS. S. Clive, can I tell you something?
CLIVE. Let me tell you something first. Since you came to the house I have had an erection twenty four hours a day except for ten minutes after the time we had intercourse.
MRS. S. I don't think that's physically possible.
CLIVE. You are causing me appalling physical suffering. Is this the way to treat a benefactor?
MRS. S. Clive, when I came to your house the other night I came because I was afraid. The cook was going to let his whole tribe in through the window.
CLIVE. I know that, my poor sweet. Amazing —
MRS. S. I came to you although you are not my nearest neighbour —
CLIVE. Rather than to the old major of seventy-two.
MRS. S. Because the last time he came to visit me I had to defend myself with a shotgun and I thought you would take no for an answer.
CLIVE. But you've already answered yes.
MRS. S. I answered yes once. Sometimes I want to say no.
CLIVE. Women, my God. Look, the picnic will start. I have to go to the picnic. Please Caroline—
MRS. S. I think I will have to go back to my own house.
CLIVE. Caroline, if you were shot with poisoned arrows, do you know what I'd do? I'd fuck your dead body and poison myself. Caroline, you smell
amazing. You are dark like this continent. Mysterious, treacherous. When you rode to me through the night. When you fainted in my arms. When I came to you in your bed, when I lifted the mosquito netting, when I said let me in, let me in. Oh don't shut me out, Caroline, let me in.

(He disappears under her skirt.)

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

(Voices are heard singing the First Noel)

Mrs. S. Don't stop. Don't stop.

(Clive comes out from under her skirt)

Mrs. S. I didn't.
Clive. I'm all sticky.
Mrs. S. What about me?
Clive. All right, are you? Come on. We mustn't be found.
Mrs. S. Don't go now.
Clive. Caroline, you are so voracious. Do let go. Tidy yourself up. There's a hair in my mouth. (Clive and Mrs. Saunders go off. Maud, Betty enter, Joshua with a hamper.)

Maud. I never would have thought a guinea fowl could taste so like a turkey.
Betty. I had to explain to the cook three times.
Maud. You did very well dear.
(Joshua sits apart with gun. Edward and Harry with Victoria on his shoulders, singing The First Noel. Maud and Betty are unpacking the hamper. Clive arrives separately)

Betty. Uncle Harry playing horsey.
Clive. And now the moment we have all been waiting for. (Clive opens champagne. General acclaim)
Clive. Oh dear, stained my trousers, never mind.
Edward. Can I have some?
Maud. Oh no Edward, not for you.
Clive. Give him half a glass.
Maud. If your father says so.
Clive. All rise please. To Her Majesty Queen Victoria, God bless her, and her husband and all her dear children.
All. The Queen.
Harry. Excellent, Clive, wherever did you get it?
Clive. I know a chap in French Equatorial Africa.

(Ellen arrives)

Betty. Ellen come and play with me.

(Betty takes a ball from the hamper and plays catch with Ellen. Murmurs of surprise and congratulations from the men whenever they catch the ball)
CLIVE. Well this is all very gloomy and solemn. Can we have the shutters open? The heat of the day has gone, we could have some light, I think. And cool drinks in the gazebo, Joshua. Have some lemonade yourself. It is most refreshing.

(Sunlight floods in as the shutters are opened. EDWARD comes)

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

CLIVE. Well there's a brave boy to own up. You should always respect me and love me, Edward. Through our father we love our Queen and our God, do you understand? It is a thing men understand.

EDWARD. Yes papa.

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

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

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

(THEY ALL start to go. EDWARD takes HARRY's hand and goes with him. CLIVE draws BETTY back.)

ACT I

BETTY. Poor Clive.

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

BETTY. It is terrible to feel betrayed.

CLIVE. I sometimes feel this whole continent is my enemy. I am pitching my whole mind and will and reason and spirit against it to tame it, and it will break over me and swallow me up.

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

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

BETTY. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Forgive me. It is not Harry's fault, it is all mine. There is something so wicked in me Clive.

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

BETTY. I am bad, bad, bad.

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

BETTY. No, no, no.
CLIVE. Joshua has seen you kissing.

BETTY. Forgive me.

CLIVE. But I don't want to know about it. I don't want to know. It was a moment of passion such as women are too weak to resist. But you must resist it, Betty, or it will destroy us. We must fight against it. We must resist this dark female lust, Betty, or it will swallow us up.


CLIVE. Yes I do forgive you. But I can't feel the same about you as I did. You are still my wife and we still have duties to the household. (They go out. As soon as they have gone EDWARD sneaks back to get the doll, which has been dropped on the floor. He picks it up and comforts it. JOSHUA comes through with a tray of drinks)

JOSHUA. Baby. Sissy. Girly. (JOSHUA goes. BETTY calls from back of house)

BETTY. Edward? (BETTY comes in) There you are my darling. Come, papa wants us all to be together. Uncle Harry is going to tell how he caught a crocodile. Mama's sorry she smacked you. (They embrace. JOSHUA comes in again, passing through) Joshua, fetch me some black thread from my sewing box. It is on the piano.

JOSHUA. You've got legs under that skirt.

BETTY. Joshua.

JOSHUA. And more than legs.

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

EDWARD. Joshua, get my mother's thread.

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

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

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

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

JOSHUA. Yes sir, Master Edward sir. (JOSHUA goes)

BETTY. Edward, you were wonderful. (SHE goes to embrace HIM but HE moves away)

EDWARD. Don't touch me.

ACT 1

Scene 4

The verandah as in Scene 1. Early morning. Nobody there. JOSHUA comes out of the house, slowly, and stands for some time doing nothing. EDWARD comes out.

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

JOSHUA. First there was nothing then there was the great goddess. She was very large and she had golden eyes and she made the stars and the sun and the earth. But soon she was miserable and lonely and she cried like a great waterfall and her tears made all the rivers in the world. So the great spirit sent a terrible monster, a tree with hundreds of eyes and a long green tongue, and it