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 I

Scene 4


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
came chasing after her and she jumped into a lake and the tree jumped in after her, and she jumped right up into the sky. And the tree couldn't follow, he was stuck in the mud. So he picked up a big handful of mud and he threw it at her, up among the stars, and it hit her on the head. And she fell down onto earth into his arms. And the ball of mud is the moon in the sky. And then they had children which is all of us.

EDWARD. It's not true, though.

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

(CLIVE and HARRY come out)

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

EDWARD. Or Mrs. Saunders?

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

HARRY. Casualties?

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

HARRY. Was that necessary?

CLIVE. Obviously, it was necessary. Harry, or it wouldn't have happened. The army will come and visit, no doubt. Treat for you Edward to see the soldiers. Would you like to be a soldier?

EDWARD. I'd rather be an explorer.

CLIVE. Ah, Harry, like you see. I didn't know an explorer at his age. Breakfast, I think, Joshua. (CLIVE and JOSHUA go in, HARRY is following)

EDWARD. Uncle.

(HARRY stops)

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

HARRY. Of course I'll talk to you.

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

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

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

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

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

ELLEN. (off) Edward!

HARRY. I have my duty to the Empire. (HARRY goes in. ELLEN comes out)

ELLEN. Edward, breakfast time. Edward.

EDWARD. I'm not hungry.

ELLEN. Come along, Edward, for goodness sake. I'm sick of all this mooning about. I sometimes see why your parents get tired of you.

EDWARD. I'm not hungry.

ELLEN. Betty, please come and speak to Edward.

(BETTY comes)