

Tennessee Williams

**Sweet Bird of Youth**

Relentless caper for all those who step  
The legend of their youth into the noon  
HART CRANE

TO CHERYL CRAWFORD

#### NOTE ON SETTING AND SPECIAL EFFECTS:

The stage is backed by a cyclorama that should give a poetic unity of mood to the several specific settings. There are non-realistic projections on this 'cyc', the most important and constant being a grove of royal palm trees. There is nearly always a wind among these very tall palm trees, sometimes loud, sometimes just a whisper, and sometimes it blends into a thematic music which will be identified, when it occurs, as the 'Lament'.

During the daytime scenes the cyclorama projection is a poetic abstraction of semi-tropical sea and sky in fair spring weather. At night it is the palm garden with its branches among the stars.

The specific settings should be treated as freely and sparingly as the sets for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* or *Summer and Smoke*. They'll be described as you come to them in the script.

## Act One

### SCENE ONE

A bedroom of an old-fashioned but still fashionable hotel somewhere along the Gulf Coast in a town called St Cloud. I think of it as resembling one of those 'Grand Hotels' around Sorrento or Monte Carlo, set in a palm garden. The style is vaguely 'Moorish'. The principal set-piece is a great double bed which should be raked towards the audience. In a sort of Moorish corner, backed by shuttered windows, is a wicker tabouret and two wicker stools, over which is suspended a Moorish lamp on a brass chain. The windows are floor length and they open out upon a gallery. There is also a practical doorframe, opening on to a corridor: the walls are only suggested.

On the great bed are two figures, a sleeping woman, and a young man awake, sitting up, in the trousers of white silk pajamas. The sleeping woman's face is partly covered by an eyeless black satin domino to protect her from morning glare. She breathes and tosses on the bed as if in the grip of a nightmare. The young man is lighting his first cigarette of the day.

[Outside the windows there are heard the soft, urgent cries of birds, the sound of their wings. Then a colored waiter, Fly, appears at the door on the corridor, bearing coffee-service for two. He knocks, Chance rises, pauses a moment at a mirror in the fourth wall to run a comb through his slightly thinning blond hair before he crosses to open the door.]

CHANCE: Aw, good, put it in there.

FLY: Yes, suh.

CHANCE: Give me the Bromo first. You better mix it for me, I'm--

FLY: Hands kind of shaky this mawnin'?

CHANCE [shuddering after the Bromo]: Open the shutters a little. Hey, I said a little, not much, not that much!

[As the shutters are opened we see him clearly for the first time: he's in his late twenties and his face looks slightly older than that; you might describe it as a 'ravaged young face' and yet it is still exceptionally good-looking. His body shows no decline, yet it's the kind of a body that white silk pajamas are, or ought to be, made for. A church bell tolls, and from another church, nearer, a choir starts singing the 'Hallelujah Chorus'. It draws him to the window, and as he crosses he speaks.]

I didn't know it was--Sunday.

FLY: Yes, suh, it's Easter Sunday.

CHANCE [leaning out a moment, hands gripping the shutters]: Uh-huh . . .

FLY: That's the Episcopal Church they're singin' in. The bell's from the Catholic Church.

CHANCE: I'll put your tip on the check.

FLY: Thank you, Mr Wayne.

CHANCE [as Fly starts for the door]: Hey. How did you know my name?

FLY: I waited tables in the Grand Ballroom when you used to come to the dances on Saturday nights, with that real pretty girl you used to dance so good with, Mr Boss Finley's daughter.

CHANCE: I'm increasing your tip to five dollars in return for a favor which is not to remember that you have recognized me or anything else at all. Your name is Fly--Shoo, Fly. Close the door with no noise.

VOICE OUTSIDE: Just a minute.

CHANCE: Who's that?

VOICE OUTSIDE: George Scudder.

[Slight pause, Fly exits.]

CHANCE: How did you know I was here?

[George Scudder enters: a coolly nice-looking, business-like young man who might be the head of the Junior Chamber of Commerce but is actually a young doctor, about thirty-six or -seven.]

SCUDDER: The assistant manager that checked you in here last night phoned me this morning that you'd come back to St Cloud.

CHANCE: So you came right over to welcome me home?

SCUDDER: Your lady friend sounds like she's coming out of ether.

CHANCE: The Princess had a rough night.

SCUDDER: You've latched on to a Princess? [mockingly] Gee.

CHANCE: She's travelling incognito.

SCUDDER: Golly, I should think she would, if she's checking in hotels with you.

CHANCE: George, you're the only man I know that still says 'gee', 'golly', and 'gosh'.

SCUDDER: Well, I'm not the sophisticated type, Chance.

CHANCE: That's for sure. Want some coffee?

SCUDDER: Nope. Just came for a talk. A quick one.

CHANCE: O.K. Start talking, man.

SCUDDER: Why've you come back to St Cloud?

CHANCE: I've still got a mother and a girl in St Cloud. How's Heavenly, George?

SCUDDER: We'll get around to that later. [He glances at his watch.] I've got to be in surgery at the hospital in twenty-five minutes.

CHANCE: You operate now, do you?

SCUDDER [opening doctor's bag]: I'm chief of staff there now.

CHANCE: Man, you've got it made.

SCUDDER: Why have you come back?

CHANCE: I heard that my mother was sick.

SCUDDER: But you said 'How's Heavenly?' not 'How's my mother?' Chance, [Chance sips coffee.] Your mother died a couple of weeks ago . . .

[Chance slowly turns his back on the man and crosses to the window. Shadows of birds sweep the blind. He lowers it a little before he turns back to Scudder.]

CHANCE: Why wasn't I notified?

SCUDDER: You were. A wire was sent you three days before she died, at the last address she had for you which was General Delivery, Los Angeles. We got no answer from that and another wire was sent you after she died, the same day of her death and we got no response from that either. Here's the Church Record. The church took up a collection for her hospital and funeral expenses. She was buried nicely in your family plot and the church has also given her a very nice headstone. I'm giving you these details in spite of the fact that I know and everyone here in town knows that you had no interest in her, less than people who knew her only slightly, such as myself.

CHANCE: How did she go?

SCUDDER: She had a long illness, Chance. You know about that.

CHANCE: Yes. She was sick when I left here the last time.

SCUDDER: She was sick at heart as well as sick in her body at that time, Chance. But people were very good to her, especially people who knew her in church, and the Reverend Walker was with her at the end.

[Chance sits down on the bed. He puts out his unfinished cigarette and immediately lights another. His voice becomes thin and strained.]

CHANCE: She never had any luck.

SCUDDER: Luck? Well, that's all over with now. If you want to know anything more about that, you can get in touch with Reverend Walker about it, although I'm afraid he won't be likely to show much cordiality to you.

CHANCE: She's gone. Why talk about it?

SCUDDER: I hope you haven't forgotten the letter I wrote you soon after you last left town.

CHANCE: No. I got no letter.

SCUDDER: I wrote you in care of an address your mother gave me, about a very important private matter.

CHANCE: I've been moving a lot.

SCUDDER: I didn't even mention names in the letter.

CHANCE: What was the letter about?

SCUDDER: Sit over here so I don't have to talk loud about this. Come over here. I can't talk loud about this. [Scudder indicates the chair by the tabouret, Chance crosses and rests a foot on the chair.] In this letter I just told you that a certain girl we know had to go through an awful experience, a tragic ordeal, because of past contact with you. I told you that I was only giving you this information so that you would know better than to come back to St Cloud, but you didn't know better.

CHANCE: I told you I got no letter. Don't tell me about a letter, I didn't get any letter.

SCUDDER: I'm telling you what I told you in this letter.

CHANCE: All right. Tell me what you told me, don't--don't talk to me like a club, a chamber of something. What did you tell me? What ordeal? What girl? Heavenly? Heavenly? George?

SCUDDER: I see it's not going to be possible to talk about this quietly and so I . . .

CHANCE [rising to block Scudder's way]: Heavenly? What ordeal?

SCUDDER: We will not mention names. Chance, I rushed over here this morning as soon as I heard you were back in St Cloud, before the girl's father and brother could hear that you were back in St Cloud, to stop you from trying to get in touch with the girl and to get you out of here. That is absolutely all I have to say to you in this room at this moment . . . But I hope I have said it in a way to impress you with the vital urgency of it, so you will leave. . . .

CHANCE: Jesus! If something's happened to Heavenly, will you please tell me--what?

SCUDDER: I said no names. We are not alone in this room. Now when I go downstairs now, I'll speak to Dan Hatcher, assistant manager here . . . he told me you'd checked in here . . . and tell him you want to check out, so you'd better get Sleeping Beauty and yourself ready to travel, and I suggest that you keep on travelling till you've crossed the State line. . . .

CHANCE: You're not going to leave this room till you've explained to me what you've been hinting at about my girl in St Cloud.

SCUDDER: There's a lot more to this which we feel ought not to be talked about to anyone, least of all to you, since you have turned into a criminal degenerate, the only right term for you, but, Chance, I think I ought to remind you that once long ago the father of this girl wrote out a prescription for you, a sort of medical prescription, which is castration. You'd better think about that, that would deprive you of all you've got to get by on. [He moves towards the steps.]

CHANCE: I'm used to that threat. I'm not going to leave St Cloud without my girl.

SCUDDER [on the steps]: You don't have a girl in St Cloud. Heavenly and I are going to be married next month. [He leaves abruptly.]

[Chance, shaken by what he has heard, turns and picks up phone and kneels on the floor.]

CHANCE: Hello? St Cloud 525. Hello, Aunt Nonnie? This is Chance, yes Chance. I'm staying at the Royal Palms and I . . . what's the matter, has something happened to Heavenly? Why can't you talk now? George Scudder was here and . . . Aunt Nonnie? Aunt Nonnie?

[The other end hangs up. The sleeping woman suddenly cries out in her sleep, Chance drops the phone on its cradle and runs to the bed.]

CHANCE [bending over her as she struggles out of a nightmare]: Princess! Princess! Hey, Princess Kos!

[He removes her eyemask; she sits up gasping and staring wild-eyed about her.]



PRINCESS: Who are you? Help!

CHANCE [on the bed]: Hush now. . . .

PRINCESS: Oh . . . I . . . had . . . a terrible dream.

CHANCE: It's all right. Chance's with you.

PRINCESS: Who?

CHANCE: Me.

PRINCESS: I don't know who you are!

CHANCE: You'll remember soon, Princess.

PRINCESS: I don't know, I don't know. . . .

CHANCE: It'll come back to you soon. What are you reachin' for, honey?

PRINCESS: Oxygen! Mask!

CHANCE: Why? Do you feel short-winded?

PRINCESS: Yes! I have . . . air . . . shortage!

CHANCE [looking for the correct piece of luggage]: Which bag is your oxygen in? I can't remember which bag we packed it in. Aw, yeah, the crocodile case, the one with the combination lock. Wasn't the first number zero . . . ? [He comes back to the bed and reaches for a bag under its far side.]

PRINCESS [as if with her dying breath]: Zero, zero. Two zeros to the right and then back around to . . .

CHANCE: Zero, three zeros, two of them to the right and the last one to the left. . . .

PRINCESS: Hurry! I can't breathe, I'm dying!

CHANCE: I'm getting it, Princess.

PRINCESS: HURRY!

CHANCE: Here we are, I've got it. . . .

[He has extracted from case a small oxygen cylinder and mask. He fits the inhalator over her nose and mouth. She falls back on the pillow. He places the other pillow under her head. After a moment, her panicky breath subsiding, she growls at him.]

PRINCESS: Why in hell did you lock it up in that case?

CHANCE [standing at the head of the bed]: You said to put all your valuables in that case.

PRINCESS: I meant my jewelry, and you know it, you bastard!

CHANCE: Princess, I didn't think you'd have these attacks any more. I thought that having me with you to protect you would stop these attacks of panic, I . . .

PRINCESS: Give me a pill.

CHANCE: Which pill?

PRINCESS: A pink one, a pinkie, and vodka. . . .

[He puts the tank on the floor, and goes over to the trunk. The phone rings, Chance gives the Princess a pill, picks up the vodka bottle, and goes to the phone. He sits down with the bottle between his knees.]

CHANCE [pouring a drink, phone held between shoulder and ear]: Hello? Oh, hello, Mr Hatcher--Oh? But Mr Hatcher, when we checked in here last night we weren't told that, and Miss Alexandra Del Lago . . .

PRINCESS [shouting]: Don't use my name!

CHANCE: . . . is suffering from exhaustion, she's not at all well, Mr Hatcher, and certainly not in any condition to travel. . . . I'm sure you don't want to take the responsibility for what might happen to Miss Del Lago. . . .

PRINCESS [shouting again]: Don't use my name!

CHANCE: . . . if she attempted to leave here today in the condition she's in . . . do you?

PRINCESS: Hang up! [He does. He comes over with his drink and the bottle to the Princess.] I want to forget everything, I want to forget who I am. . . .

CHANCE [handing her the drink]: He said that . . .

PRINCESS [drinking]: Please shut up, I'm forgetting!

CHANCE [taking the glass from her]: Okay, go on, forget. There's nothing better than that, I wish I could do it. . . .

PRINCESS: I can, I will. I'm forgetting . . . I'm forgetting. . . .

[She lies down, Chance moves to the foot of the bed, where he seems to be struck with an idea. He puts the bottle down on the floor, runs to the chaise, and picks up a tape recorder. Taking it back to the bed, he places the recorder on the floor. As he plugs it in, he coughs.]

What's going on?

CHANCE: Looking for my toothbrush.

PRINCESS [throwing the oxygen mask on the bed]: Will you please take that away.

CHANCE: Sure you've had enough of it?

PRINCESS [laughing breathlessly]: Yes, for God's sake, take it away. I must look hideous in it.

CHANCE [taking the mask]: No, no, you just look exotic, like a Princess from Mars or a big magnified insect.

PRINCESS: Thank you, check the cylinder please.

CHANCE: For what?

PRINCESS: Check the air left in it; there's a gauge on the cylinder that gives the pressure. . . .

CHANCE: You're still breathing like a quarter horse that's been run a full mile. Are you sure you don't want a doctor?

PRINCESS: No, for God's sake . . . no!

CHANCE: Why are you so scared of doctors?

PRINCESS [hoarsely, quickly]: I don't need them. What happened is nothing at all. It happens frequently to me. Something disturbs me . . . adrenaline's pumped in my blood and I get short-winded, that's all, that's all there is to it. . . . I woke up, I didn't know where I was or who I was with, I got panicky . . . adrenaline was released and I got short-winded. . . .

CHANCE: Are you okay now, Princess? Huh? [He kneels on the, bed, and helps straighten up the pillows.]

PRINCESS: Not quite yet, but I will be. I will be.

CHANCE: You're full of complexes, plump lady.

PRINCESS: What did you call me?

CHANCE: Plump lady.

PRINCESS: Why do you call me that? Have I let go of my figure?

CHANCE: You put on a good deal of weight after that disappointment you had last month.

PRINCESS [hitting him with a small pillow]: What disappointment? I don't remember any.

CHANCE: Can you control your memory like that?

PRINCESS: Yes. I've had to learn to. What is this place, a hospital? And you, what are you, a male nurse?

CHANCE: I take care of you but I'm not your nurse.

PRINCESS: But you're employed by me, aren't you? For some purpose or other?

CHANCE: I'm not on salary with you.

PRINCESS: What are you on? Just expenses?

CHANCE: Yep. You're footing the bills.

PRINCESS: I see. Yes, I see.

CHANCE: Why're you rubbing your eyes?

PRINCESS: My vision's so cloudy! Don't I wear glasses, don't I have any glasses?

CHANCE: You had a little accident with your glasses,

PRINCESS: What was that?

CHANCE: You fell on your face with them on.

PRINCESS: Were they completely demolished?

CHANCE: One lens cracked.

PRINCESS: Well, please give me the remnants. I don't mind waking up in an intimate situation with someone, but I like to see who it's with, so I can make whatever adjustment seems called for. . . .

CHANCE [rising and going to the trunk, where he lights cigarette]: You know what I look like.

PRINCESS: No, I don't.

CHANCE: You did.

PRINCESS: I tell you I don't remember, it's all gone away!

CHANCE: I don't believe in amnesia.

PRINCESS: Neither do I. But you have to believe a thing that happens to you.

CHANCE: Where did I put your glasses?

PRINCESS: Don't ask me. You say I fell on them. If I was in that condition I wouldn't be likely to know where anything is I had with me. What happened last night?

[He has picked them up but not given them to her.]

CHANCE: You knocked yourself out.

PRINCESS: Did we sleep here together?

CHANCE: Yes, but I didn't molest you.

PRINCESS: Should I thank you for that, or accuse you of cheating? [She laughs sadly.]

CHANCE: I like you, you're a nice monster.

PRINCESS: Your voice sounds young. Are you young?

CHANCE: My age is twenty-nine years.

PRINCESS: That's young for anyone but an Arab. Are you very good-looking?

CHANCE: I used to be the best-looking boy in this town.

PRINCESS: How large is the town?

CHANCE: Fair-sized.

PRINCESS: Well, I like a good mystery novel, I read them to put me to sleep and if they don't put me to sleep, they're good; but this one's a little too good for comfort. I wish you would find me my glasses. . . .

[He reaches over headboard to hand the glasses to her. She puts them on and looks him over. Then she motions him to come nearer and touches his bare chest with her finger tips.]

Well, I may have done better, but God knows I've done worse,

CHANCE: What are you doing now, Princess?

PRINCESS: The tactile approach.

CHANCE: You do that like you were feeling a piece of goods to see if it was genuine silk or phony. . . .

PRINCESS: It feels like silk. Genuine! This much I do remember, that I like bodies to be hairless, silky-smooth gold!

CHANCE: Do I meet these requirements?

PRINCESS: You seem to meet those requirements. But I still have a feeling that something is not satisfied in the relation between us.

CHANCE [moving away from her]: You've had your experiences, I've had mine. You can't expect everything to be settled at once. . . . Two different experiences of two different people. Naturally there's some things that have to be settled between them before there's any absolute agreement.

PRINCESS [throwing the glasses on the bed]: Take that splintered lens out before it gets in my eye.

CHANCE [obeying this instruction by knocking the glasses sharply on the bed table]: You like to give orders, don't you?

PRINCESS: It's something I seem to be used to.

CHANCE: How would you like to take them? To be a slave?

PRINCESS: What time is it?

CHANCE: My watch is in hock somewhere. Why don't you look at yours?

PRINCESS: Where's mine?

[He reaches lazily over to the table, and hands it to her.]

CHANCE: It's stopped, at five past seven.

PRINCESS: Surely it's later than that, or earlier, that's no hour when I'm . . .

CHANCE: Platinum, is it?

PRINCESS: No, it's only white gold. I never travel with anything very expensive.

CHANCE: Why? Do you get robbed much? Huh? Do you get 'rolled' often?

PRINCESS: Get what?

CHANCE: 'Rolled'. Isn't that expression in your vocabulary?

PRINCESS: Give me the phone.

CHANCE: For what?

PRINCESS: I said give me the phone.

CHANCE: I know. And I said for what?

PRINCESS: I want to inquire where I am and who is with me?

CHANCE: Take it easy.

PRINCESS: Will you give me the phone?

CHANCE: Relax. You're getting short-winded again. . . .

[He takes hold of her shoulders.]

PRINCESS: Please let go of me.

CHANCE: Don't you feel secure with me? Lean back. Lean back against me.

PRINCESS: Lean back?

CHANCE: This way, this way. There . . .

[He pulls her into his arms. She rests in them, panting a little like a trapped rabbit.]

PRINCESS: It gives you an awful trapped feeling this, this memory block. . . . I feel as if someone I loved had died lately, and I don't want to remember who it could be.

CHANCE: Do you remember your name?

PRINCESS: Yes, I do.

CHANCE: What's your name?

PRINCESS: I think there's some reason why I prefer not to tell you.

CHANCE: Well, I happen to know it. You registered under a phony name in Palm Beach but I discovered your real one. And you admitted it to me.

PRINCESS: I'm the Princess Kosmonopolis.

CHANCE: Yes, and you used to be known as . . .

PRINCESS [sitting up sharply]: No, stop . . . will you let me do it? Quietly, in my own way? The last place I remem--brr . . .

CHANCE: What's the last place you remember?

PRINCESS: A town with the crazy name of Tallahassee.

CHANCE: Yeah. We drove through there. That's where I reminded you that today would be Sunday and we ought to lay in a supply of liquor to get us through it without us being dehydrated too severely, and so we stopped there but it was a college town and we had some trouble locating a package store, open. . . .

PRINCESS: But we did, did we?

CHANCE [getting up for the bottle and pouring her a drink]: Oh, sure, we bought three bottles of vodka. You curled up in the back seat with one of those bottles and when I looked back you were blotto. I intended to stay on the old Spanish Trail straight through to Texas, where you had some oil wells to look at. I didn't stop here . . . I was stopped.

PRINCESS: What by, a cop? Or . . .

CHANCE: No. No cop, but I was arrested by something.

PRINCESS: My car. Where is my car?

CHANCE [handing her the drink]: In the hotel parking lot, Princess.

PRINCESS: Oh, then, this is a hotel?

CHANCE: It's the elegant old Royal Palms Hotel in the town of St Cloud.

[Gulls Fly past window, shadows sweeping the blind: they cry out with soft urgency.]

PRINCESS: Those pigeons out there sound hoarse. They sound like gulls to me. Of course, they could be pigeons with laryngitis.

[Chance glances at her with his flickering smile and laughs softly.]



Will you help me please? I'm about to get up.

CHANCE: What do you want? I'll get it.

PRINCESS: I want to go to the window.

CHANCE: What for?

PRINCESS: To look out of it.

CHANCE: I can describe the view to you.

PRINCESS: I'm not sure I'd trust your description. WELL?

CHANCE: Okay, oopsa-daisy.

PRINCESS: My God! I said help me up, not . . . toss me on to the carpet! [Sways dizzily a moment, clutching bed. Then draws a breath and crosses to the window.]

[The Princess pauses as she gazes out, squinting into noon's brilliance.]

CHANCE: Well, what do you see? Give me your description of the view, Princess?

PRINCESS [facing the audience]: I see a palm garden.

CHANCE: And a four-lane highway just past it.

PRINCESS [squinting and shielding her eyes]: Yes, I see that and a strip of beach with some bathers and then, an infinite stretch of nothing but water and . . . [She cries softly and turns away from the window.]

CHANCE: What? . . .

PRINCESS: Oh God, I remember the thing I wanted not to. The goddam end of my life! [She draws a deep shuddering breath.]

CHANCE [running to her aid]: What's the matter?!

PRINCESS: Help me back to bed. Oh God, no wonder I didn't want to remember, I was no fool!

[He assists her to the bed. There is an unmistakable sympathy in his manner, however shallow.]

CHANCE: Oxygen?

PRINCESS [drawing another deep shuddering breath]: No! Where's the stuff? Did you leave it in the car?

CHANCE: Oh, the stuff? Under the mattress. [Moving to the other side of the bed, he pulls out a small pouch.]

PRINCESS: A stupid place to put it.

CHANCE [sitting at the foot of the bed]: What's wrong with under the mattress?

PRINCESS [sitting up on the edge of the bed]: There's such a thing as chambermaids in the world, they make up beds, they come across lumps in a mattress.

CHANCE: This isn't pot. What is it?

PRINCESS: Wouldn't that be pretty? A year in jail in one of those model prisons for distinguished addicts. What is it? Don't you know what it is, you beautiful, stupid young man? It's hashish, Moroccan, the finest.

CHANCE: Oh, hash! How'd you get it through customs when you came back for your come-back?

PRINCESS: I didn't get it through customs. The ship's doctor gave me injections while this stuff was winging over the ocean to a shifty young gentleman who thought he could blackmail me for it. [She puts on her slippers with a vigorous gesture.]

CHANCE: Couldn't he?

PRINCESS: Of course not. I called his bluff.

CHANCE: You took injections coming over?

PRINCESS: With my neuritis? I had to. Come on, give it to me.

CHANCE: Don't you want it packed right?

PRINCESS: You talk too much. You ask too many questions. I need something quick. [She rises.]

CHANCE: I'm a new hand at this.

PRINCESS: I'm sure, or you wouldn't discuss it in a hotel room. . . .

[She turns to the audience, and intermittently changes the focus of her attention.]

For years they all told me that it was ridiculous of me to feel that I couldn't go back to the screen or the stage as a middle-aged woman. They told me I was an artist, not just a star whose career depended on youth. But I knew in my heart that the legend of Alexandra Del Lago couldn't be separated from an appearance of youth. . . . There's no more valuable knowledge than knowing the right time to go. I knew it. I went at the right time to go.

RETIRED! Where to? To what? To that dead planet the moon. . . .

There's nowhere else to retire to when you retire from an art because, believe it or not, I really was once an artist. So I retired to the moon, but the atmosphere of the moon doesn't have any oxygen in it. I began to feel breathless, in that withered, withering country, of time coming after time not meant to come after, and so I discovered . . . Haven't you fixed it yet?

[Chance rises and goes to her with a cigarette he has been preparing.]

Discovered this!

And other practices like it, to put to sleep the tiger that raged in my nerves. . . . Why the unsatisfied tiger? In the nerves' jungle? Why is anything, anywhere, unsatisfied, and raging? . . .

Ask somebody's good doctor. But don't believe his answer because it isn't . . . the answer . . . if I had just been old but you see, I wasn't old. . . .

I just wasn't young, not young, young. I just wasn't young any more. . . .

CHANCE: Nobody's young any more. . . .

PRINCESS: But you see, I couldn't get old with that tiger, still in me raging.

CHANCE: Nobody can get old. . . .

PRINCESS: Stars in retirement sometimes give acting lessons. Or take up painting, paint flowers on pots, or landscapes. I could have painted the landscapes of the endless, withering country in which I wandered like a lost nomad. If I could paint deserts and nomads, if I could paint . . . hahaha. . . .

CHANCE: Sh-Sh-sh-

PRINCESS: Sorry!

CHANCE: Smoke.

PRINCESS: Yes, smoke! And then the young lovers . . .

CHANCE: Me?

PRINCESS: You? Yes, finally you. But you come after the come-back. Ha . . . Ha . . . The glorious come-back, when I turned fool and came back. . . . The screen's a very clear mirror. There's a thing called a close-up. The camera advances and you stand still and your head, your

face, is caught in the frame of the picture with a light blazing on it and all your terrible history screams while you smile. . . .

CHANCE: How do you know? Maybe it wasn't a failure, maybe you were just scared, just chicken, Princess. . . ha-ha-ha . . .

PRINCESS: Not a failure . . . after that close-up they gasped. . . . People gasped. . . . I heard them whisper, their shocked whispers. Is that her? Is that her? Her? . . . I made the mistake of wearing a very elaborate gown to the premiere, a gown with a train that had to be gathered up as I rose from my seat and began the interminable retreat from the city of flames, up, up, up the unbearably long theatre aisle, gasping for breath and still clutching up the regal white train of my gown, all the way up the forever . . . length of the aisle, and behind me some small unknown man grabbing at me, saying, stay, stay! At last the top of the aisle, I turned and struck him, then let the train fall, forgot it, and tried to run down them arble stairs, tripped of course, fell and rolled, rolled, like a sailor's drunk whore to the bottom . . . hands, merciful hands without faces, assisted me to get up. After that? Flight, just flight, not interrupted until I woke up this morning. . . . Oh God it's gone out. . . .

CHANCE: Let me fix you another. Huh? Shall I fix you another?

PRINCESS: Let me finish yours. You can't retire with the out-crying heart of an artist still crying out, in your body, in your nerves, in your what? Heart? Oh, no, that's gone, that's . . .

CHANCE [He goes to her takes the cigarette out of her hand and gives her a fresh one.]: Here, I've fixed you another one. . . . Princess, I've fixed you another. . . . [He sits on the floor, leaning against the foot of the bed.]

PRINCESS: Well, sooner or later, at some point in your life, the thing that you lived for is lost or abandoned, and then . . . you die, or find something else. This is my something else. . . .

[She approaches the bed.]

And ordinarily I take the most fantastic precautions against . . . detection. . . .

[She sits on the bed then lies down on her back, her head over the foot, near his.]

I cannot imagine what possessed me to let you know. Knowing so little about you as I seem to know.

CHANCE: I must've inspired a good deal of confidence in you.

PRINCESS: If that's the case, I've gone crazy. Now tell me something. What is that body of water, that sea, out past the palm garden and four-lane highway? I ask you because I remember now that we turned west from the sea when we went on to that highway called the Old Spanish Trail,

CHANCE: We've come back to the sea.

PRINCESS: What sea?

CHANCE: The Gulf.

PRINCESS: The Gulf?

CHANCE: The Gulf of misunderstanding between me and you. . . .

PRINCESS: We don't understand each other? And lie here smoking this stuff?

CHANCE: Princess, don't forget that this stuff is yours, that you provided me with it.

PRINCESS: What are you trying to prove? [Church bells toll.]  
Sundays go on a long time.

CHANCE: You don't deny it was yours.

PRINCESS: What's mine?

CHANCE: You brought it into the country, you smuggled it through customs into the U. S. A., and you had a fair supply of it at that hotel in Palm Beach and were asked to check out before you were ready to do so, because its aroma drifted into the corridor one breezy night.

PRINCESS: What are you trying to prove?

CHANCE: You don't deny that you introduced me to it?

PRINCESS: Boy, I doubt very much that I have any vice that I'd need to introduce to you . . . .

CHANCE: Don't call me 'boy'.

PRINCESS: Why not?

CHANCE: It sounds condescending. And all my vices were caught from other people.

PRINCESS: What are you trying to prove? My memory's come back now. Excessively clearly. It was this mutual practice that brought us together. When you came in my cabana to give me one of those papaya cream rubs, you sniffed, you grinned, and said you'd like a stick too.

CHANCE: That's right. I knew the smell of it.

PRINCESS: What are you trying to prove?

CHANCE: You asked me four or five times what I'm trying to prove, the answer is nothing. I'm just making sure that your memory's cleared up now. You do remember me coming in your cabana to give you those papaya cream rubs?

PRINCESS: Of course I do, Carl!

CHANCE: My name is not Carl. It's Chance.

PRINCESS: You called yourself Carl.

CHANCE: I always carry an extra name in my pocket.

PRINCESS: You're not a criminal, are you?

CHANCE: No ma'am, not me. You're the one that's committed a federal offence.

[She stares at him a moment, and then goes to the door leading to the hall, looks out and listens.]

What did you do that for?

PRINCESS [closing the door]: To see if someone was planted outside the door.

CHANCE: You still don't trust me?

PRINCESS: Someone that gives me a false name?

CHANCE: You registered under a phony one in Palm Beach.

PRINCESS: Yes, to avoid getting any reports or condolences on the disaster I ran from.

[She crosses to the window. There is a pause followed by the 'Lament'.]

And so we've not arrived at any agreement?

CHANCE: No ma'am, not a complete one.

[She turns her back to the window and gazes at him from there.]

PRINCESS: What's the gimmick? The hitch?

CHANCE: The usual one.

PRINCESS: What's that?

CHANCE: Doesn't somebody always hold out for something?

PRINCESS: Are you holding out for something?

CHANCE: Uh-huh . . .

PRINCESS: What?

CHANCE: You said that you had a large block of stock, more than half-ownership in a sort of a second-rate Hollywood studio, and could put me under contract. I doubted your word about that. You're not like any phony I've met before, but phonies come in all types and sizes. So I held out, even after we locked your cabana door for the papaya cream rubs. . . . You wired for some contract papers we signed. It was notarized and witnessed by three strangers found in a bar.

PRINCESS: Then why did you hold out, still?

CHANCE: I didn't have much faith in it. You know, you can buy those things for six bits in novelty stores. I've been conned and tricked too often to put much faith in anything that could still be phony.

PRINCESS: You're wise. However, I have the impression that there's been a certain amount of intimacy between us.

CHANCE: A certain amount. No more. I wanted to hold your interest.

PRINCESS: Well, you miscalculated. My interest always increases with satisfaction.

CHANCE: Then you're unusual in that respect, too.

PRINCESS: In all respects I'm not common.

CHANCE: But I guess the contract we signed is full of loopholes?

PRINCESS: Truthfully, yes, it is. I can get out of it if I wanted to. And so can the studio. Do you have any talent?

CHANCE: For what?

PRINCESS: Acting, baby, ACTING!

CHANCE: I'm not as positive of it as I once was. I've had more chances than I could count on my fingers, and made the grade almost, but not quite, every time. Something always blocks me. . . .

PRINCESS: What? What? Do you know?

[He rises. The lamentation is heard very faintly.]

Fear?

CHANCE: No not fear, but terror . . . otherwise would I be your goddam caretaker, hauling you across the country? Picking you up when you fall? Well would I? Except for that block, be anything less than a star?

PRINCESS: CARL!

CHANCE: Chance . . . Chance Wayne. You're stoned.

PRINCESS: Chance, come back to your youth. Put off this false, ugly hardness and . . .

CHANCE: And be took in by every con-merchant I meet?

PRINCESS: I'm not a phony, believe me.

CHANCE: Well, then, what is it you want? Come on, say it, Princess.

PRINCESS: Chance, come here. [He smiles but doesn't move.] Come here and let's comfort each other a little. [He crouches by the bed; she encircles him with her bare arms.]

CHANCE: Princess! Do you know something? All this conversation has been recorded on tape?

PRINCESS: What are you talking about?

CHANCE: Listen. I'll play it back to you. [He uncovers the tape recorder; approaches her with the earpiece.]

PRINCESS: How did you get that thing?

CHANCE: You bought it for me in Palm Beach. I said that I wanted it to improve my diction. . .

[He presses the 'play' button on the recorder. The following between ">>>" and "<<<" can either be on a public address system, or can be cut.]

(PLAYBACK)

>>>

PRINCESS: What is it? Don't you know what it is, you beautiful, stupid, young man? It's hashish, Moroccan, the finest.

CHANCE: Oh, hash! How'd you get it through customs when you came back for your come-back?



PRINCESS: I didn't get it through customs. The ship's doctor . . .  
<<<<

[He snaps off the recorder and picks up the reels.]

PRINCESS: What a smart cookie you are.

CHANCE: How does it feel to be over a great big barrel?

PRINCESS: This is blackmail is it? Where's my mink stole?

CHANCE: Not stolen.

[He tosses it to her contemptuously from a chair.]

PRINCESS: Where is my jewel case?

CHANCE [picking it up off the floor and throwing it on the bed]: Here.

PRINCESS [opening it up and starting to put on some jewelry]: Every piece is insured and described in detail. Lloyd's in London.

CHANCE: Who's a smart cookie, Princess? You want your purse now so you can count your money?

PRINCESS: I don't carry currency with me, just travellers, checks.

CHANCE: I noted that fact already. But I got a fountain pen you can sign them with.

PRINCESS: Ho, Ho!

CHANCE: 'Ho, ho!' What an insincere laugh; if that's how you fake a laugh, no wonder you didn't make good in your come-back picture. . . .

PRINCESS: Are you serious about this attempt to blackmail me?

CHANCE: You'd better believe it. Your trade's turned dirt on you, Princess. You understand that language.

PRINCESS: The language of the gutter is understood anywhere that anyone ever fell in it.

CHANCE: Aw, then you do understand.

PRINCESS: And if I shouldn't comply with this order of yours?

CHANCE: You still got a name, you're still a personage, Princess. You wouldn't want Confidential or Whisper or Hush-Hush or the narcotics department of the F. B. I., to get hold of one of these tape-records, would you? And I'm going to make lots of copies. Huh? Princess?

PRINCESS: You are trembling and sweating . . . you see this part doesn't suit you, you just don't play it well, Chance. . . . [Chance puts the reels in a suitcase.] I hate to think of what kind of desperation has made you try to intimidate me, ME? ALEXANDRA DEL LAGO? with that ridiculous threat. Why it's so silly, it's touching, downright endearing, it makes me feel close to you, Chance. You were well born, weren't you? Born of good Southern stock, in a genteel tradition, with just one disadvantage, a laurel wreath on your forehead, given too early, without enough effort to earn it . . . where's your scrapbook, Chance? [He crosses to the bed, takes a travellers' checkbook out of her purse, and extends it to her.] Where's your book full of little theatre notices and stills that show you in the background of . . .

CHANCE: Here! Here! Start signing . . . or . . .

PRINCESS [pointing to the bathroom]: Or WHAT? Go take a shower under cold water. I don't like hot sweaty bodies in a tropical climate. Oh, you, I do want and will accept, still . . . under certain conditions which I will make very clear to you.

CHANCE: Here. [Throws the checkbook towards the bed.]

PRINCESS: Put this away. And your leaky fountain pen. . . . When monster meets monster, one monster has to give way, AND IT WILL NEVER BE ME. I'm an older hand at it . . . with much more natural aptitude at it than you have. . . . Now then, you put the cart a little in front of the horse. Signed checks are payment, delivery comes first. Certainly I can afford it, I could deduct you, as my caretaker, Chance, remember that I was a star before big taxes . . . and had a husband who was a great merchant prince. He taught me to deal with money. . . . Now, Chance, please pay close attention while I tell you the very special conditions under which I will keep you in my employment . . . after this miscalculation. . . . Forget the legend that I was and the ruin of that legend. Whether or not I do have a disease of the heart that places an early terminal date on my life, no mention of that, no reference to it ever. No mention of death, never, never a word on that odious subject. I've been accused of having a death wish but I think it's life that I wish for, terribly, shamelessly, on any terms whatsoever. When I say now, the answer must not be later. I have only one way to forget these things I don't want to remember and that's through the act of love-making. That's the only dependable distraction so when I say now, because I need that distraction, it has to be now, not later.

[She crosses to the bed. He rises from the opposite side of the bed and goes to the window. She gazes at his back as he looks out of the window. Pause: 'Lament'.]

PRINCESS [finally, softly]: Chance, I need that distraction. It's time for me to find out if you're able to give it to me. You mustn't hang on to your silly little idea that you can increase your value by turning away and looking out of a window when somebody wants you. . . . I want you. . . . I say now and I mean now, then and not until then will I call downstairs and tell the hotel cashier that I'm sending a young man down with some travellers' checks to cash for me. . . .

CHANCE [turning slowly from the window]: Aren't you ashamed, a little?

PRINCESS: Of course I am. Aren't you?

CHANCE: More than a little. . . .

PRINCESS: Close the shutters, draw the curtain across them. [He obeys these commands.]

Now get a little sweet music on the radio and come here to me and make me almost believe that we're a pair of young lovers without any shame.

## SCENE TWO

[As the curtain rises, the Princess has a fountain pen in hand and is signing checks, Chance, now wearing dark slacks, socks, and shoes of the fashionable loafer type, is putting on his shirt and speaks as the curtain opens.]

CHANCE: Keep on writing, has the pen gone dry?

PRINCESS: I started at the back of the book where the big ones are.

CHANCE: Yes, but you stopped too soon.

PRINCESS: All right, one more from the front of the book as a token of some satisfaction. I said some, not complete.

CHANCE [picking up the phone]: Operator--Give me the cashier please.

PRINCESS: What are you doing that for?

CHANCE: You have to tell the cashier you're sending me down with some travellers' checks to cash for you.

PRINCESS: Have to? Did you say have to?

CHANCE: Cashier? Just a moment. The Princess Kosmonopolis. [He thrusts the phone at her.]

PRINCESS [into the phone]: Who is this? But I don't want the cashier. My watch has stopped and I want to know the right time . . . five after three? Thank you . . . he says it's five after three. [She hangs up and smiles at Chance.] I'm not ready to be left alone in this room. Now let's not fight any more over little points like that, let's save our strength for the big ones. I'll have the checks cashed for you as soon as I've put on my face. I just don't want to be left alone in this

place till I've put on the face that I face the world with, baby. Maybe after we get to know each other, we won't fight over little points any more, the struggle will stop, maybe we won't even fight over big points, baby. Will you open the shutters a little bit, please? [He doesn't seem to hear her. The 'Lament' is heard.] I won't be able to see my face in the mirror. . . . Open the shutters, I won't be able to see my face in the mirror.

CHANCE: Do you want to?

PRINCESS [pointing]: Unfortunately I have to! Open the shutters!

[He does. He remains by the open shutters, looking out as the Lament in the air continues.]

CHANCE: --I was born in this town. I was born in St Cloud.

PRINCESS: That's a good way to begin to tell your life story. Tell me your life story. I'm interested in it, I really would like to know it. Let's make it your audition, a sort of screen test for you. I can watch you in the mirror while I put my face on. And tell me your life story, and if you hold my attention with your life story, I'll know you have talent, I'll wire my studio on the Coast that I'm still alive and I'm on my way to the Coast with a young man named Chance Wayne that I think is cut out to be a great young star.

CHANCE [moving out on the forestage]: Here is the town I was born in, and lived in till ten years ago, in St Cloud. I was a twelve-pound baby, normal and healthy, but with some kind of quantity 'X' in my blood, a wish or a need to be different. . . . The kids that I grew up with are mostly still here and what they call 'settled down', gone into business, married, and bringing up children; the little crowd I was in with, that I used to be the star of, was the snobset, the ones with the big names and money. I didn't have either. . . . [The Princess utters a soft laugh in her dimmed-out area.] What I had was . . . [The Princess half-turns, brush poised in a faint, dusty beam of light.]

PRINCESS: BEAUTY! Say it! Say it! What you had was beauty! I had it! I say it with pride, no matter how sad, being gone, now.

CHANCE: Yes, well . . . the others . . . [The Princess resumes brushing hair and the sudden cold beam of light on her goes out again] . . . are all now members of the young social set here. The girls are young matrons, bridge-players, and the boys belong to the Junior Chamber of Commerce and some of them, clubs in New Orleans such as Rex and Comus and ride on the Mardi Gras floats. Wonderful? No, boring . . . I wanted, expected, intended to get, something better. . . . Yes, and I did, I got it. I did things that fat-headed gang never dreamed of. Hell, when they were still freshmen at Tulane or L. S. U. or Ole Miss, I sang in the chorus of the biggest show in New York, in Oklahoma, and had pictures in Life in a cowboy outfit, tossin' a ten-gallon hat in the air! YIP . . . EEEEEEE! Ha-ha. . . . And at the same time pursued my other vocation. . . .

Maybe the one one I was truly meant for, love-making . . . slept in the social register of New York! Millionaires' widows and wives and debutante daughters of such famous names as Vanderbrook and Masters and Halloway and Connaught, names mentioned daily in columns, whose credit cards are their faces. . . . And . . .

PRINCESS: What did they pay you?

CHANCE: I gave people more than I took. Middle-aged people I gave back a feeling of youth. Lonely girls? Understanding, appreciation! An absolutely convincing show of affection. Sad people, lost people? Something light and uplifting! Eccentrics? Tolerance, even odd things they long for. . . . But always just at the point when I might get something back that would solve my own need, which was great, to rise to their level, the memory of my girl would pull me back home to her . . . and when I came home for those visits, man oh man how that town buzzed with excitement. I'm telling you, it would blaze with it, and then that thing in Korea came along. I was about to be sucked into the Army so I went into the Navy, because a sailor's uniform suited me better, the uniform was all that suited me, though. . . .

PRINCESS: Ah-ha!

CHANCE [mocking her]: Ah-ha. I wasn't able to stand the goddam routine, discipline. . . .

I kept thinking, this stops everything. I was twenty-three, that was the peak of my youth, and I knew my youth wouldn't last long. By the time I got out, Christ knows, I might be nearly thirty! Who would remember Chance Wayne? In a life like mine, you just can't stop, you know, can't take time out between steps, you've got to keep going right on up from one thing to the other; once you drop out, it leaves you and goes on without you and you're washed up.

PRINCESS: I don't think I know what you're talking about.

CHANCE: I'm talking about the parade. THE parade! The parade! the boys that go places, that's the parade I'm talking about, not a parade of swabbies on a wet deck. And so I ran my comb through my hair one morning and noticed that eight or ten hairs had come out, a warning signal of a future baldness. My hair was still thick. But would it be, five years from now, or even three? When the war would be over, that scared me, that speculation. I started to have bad dreams. Nightmares and cold sweats at night, and I had palpitations, and on my leaves I got drunk and woke up in strange places with faces on the next pillow I had never seen before. My eyes had a wild look in them in the mirror. . . . I got the idea I wouldn't live through the war, that I wouldn't come back, that all the excitement and glory of being Chance Wayne would go up in smoke at the moment of contact between my brain and a bit of hot steel that happened to be in the air at the same time and place that my head was . . . that thought didn't comfort me any. Imagine a whole lifetime of dreams and ambitions and hopes dissolving away in one instant, being blacked out like some arithmetic problem washed off a blackboard by a wet sponge, just by some little accident like a bullet, not even aimed at you but just shot off in space, and so I cracked up, my nerves did. I got a medical discharge out of the service and I came home in civvies, then it was when I noticed how different it was, the town and the people in it. Polite? Yes, but not cordial. No headlines in the papers, just an item that measured one

inch at the bottom of page five saying that Chance Wayne, the son of Mrs Emily Wayne of North Front Street had received an honorable discharge from the Navy as the result of illness and was home to recover . . . that was when Heavenly became more important to me than anything else. . . .

PRINCESS: Is Heavenly a girl's name?

CHANCE: Heavenly is the name of my girl in St Cloud.

PRINCESS: Is Heavenly why we stopped here?

CHANCE: What other reason for stopping here can you think of?

PRINCESS: So . . . I'm being used. Why not? Even a dead race horse is used to make glue. Is she pretty?

CHANCE [handing Princess a snapshot]: This is a flashlight photo I took of her, nude, one night on Diamond Key, which is a little sandbar about half a mile off-shore which is under water at high tide. This was taken with the tide coming in. The water is just beginning to lap over her body like it desired her like I did and still do and will always, always, [Chance takes back the snapshot.] Heavenly was her name. You can see that it fits her. This was her at fifteen.

PRINCESS: Did you have her that early?

CHANCE: I was just two years older, we had each other that early.

PRINCESS: Sheer luck!

CHANCE: Princess, the great difference between people in this world is not between the rich and the poor or the good and the evil, the biggest of all differences in this world is between the ones that had or have pleasure in love and those that haven't and hadn't any pleasure in love, but just watched it with envy, sick envy. The spectators and the performers. I don't mean just ordinary pleasure or the kind you can buy, I mean great pleasure, and nothing that's happened to me or to Heavenly since can cancel out the many long nights without sleep when we gave each other such pleasure in love as very few people can look back on in their lives. . . .

PRINCESS: No question, go on with your story.

CHANCE: Each time I came back to St Cloud I had her love to come back to. . . .

PRINCESS: Something permanent in a world of change?

CHANCE: Yes, after each disappointment, each failure at something, I'd come back to her like going to a hospital.

PRINCESS: She put cool bandages on your wounds? Why didn't you marry this Heavenly little physician?

CHANCE: Didn't I tell you that Heavenly is the daughter of Boss Finley, the biggest political wheel in this part of the country? Well, if I didn't I made a serious omission.

PRINCESS: He disapproved?

CHANCE: He figured his daughter rated someone a hundred, a thousand per cent better than me, Chance Wayne. . . . The last time I came back here, she phoned me from the drugstore and told me to swim out to Diamond Key, that she would meet me there. I waited a long time, till almost sunset, and the tide started coming in before I heard the put-put of an outboard motor-boat coming out to the sandbar. The sun was behind her, I squinted. She had on a silky wet tank suit and fans of water and mist made rainbows about her . . . ? she stood up in the boat as if she was water-skiing, shouting things at me an' circling around the sandbar, around and around it!

PRINCESS: She didn't come to the sandbar?

CHANCE: No, just circled around it, shouting things at me. I'd swim toward the boat, I would just about reach it and she'd race it away, throwing up misty rainbows, disappearing in rainbows and then circling back and shouting things at me again. . . .

PRINCESS: What things?

CHANCE: Things like, 'Chance go away.' 'Don't come back to St Cloud.' 'Chance, you're a liar.' 'Chance, I'm sick of your lies!' 'My father's right about you!' 'Chance, you're no good any more.' 'Chance, stay away from St Cloud.' The last time around the sandbar she shouted nothing, just waved good-bye and turned the boat back to shore.

PRINCESS: Is that the end of the story?

CHANCE: Princess, the end of the story is up to you. You want to help me?

PRINCESS: I want to help you. Believe me, not everybody wants to hurt everybody. I don't want to hurt you, can you believe me?

CHANCE: I can if you prove it to me.

PRINCESS: How can I prove it to you?

CHANCE: I have something in mind.

PRINCESS: Yes, what?

CHANCE: O.K., I'll give you a quick outline of this project I have in mind. Soon as I've talked to my girl and shown her my contract, we go on, you and me. Not far, just to New Orleans,

Princess. But no more hiding away, we check in at the Hotel Roosevelt there as Alexandra Del Lago and Chance Wayne. Right away the newspaper call you and you give a press conference. . . .

PRINCESS: Oh?

CHANCE: Yes! The idea briefly, a local contest of talent to find a pair of young people to star as unknowns in a picture you're planning to make to show your faith in YOUTH, Princess. You stage this contest, you invite other judges, but your decision decides it!

PRINCESS: And you and . . . ?

CHANCE: Yes, Heavenly and I win it. We get her out of St Cloud, we go to the West Coast together.

PRINCESS: And me?

CHANCE: You?

PRINCESS: Have you forgotten, for instance, that any public attention is what I least want in the world?

CHANCE: What better way can you think of to show the public that you're a person with bigger than personal interest?

PRINCESS: Oh, yes, yes, but not true.

CHANCE: You could pretend it was true.

PRINCESS: If I didn't despise pretending!

CHANCE: I understand. Time does it. Hardens people. Time and the world that you've lived in.

PRINCESS: Which you want for yourself. Isn't that what you want? [She looks at him, goes to the phone, then speaks into phone] Cashier?

          Hello Cashier? This is the Princess Kosmonopolis speaking. I'm sending down a young man to cash some travelers' checks for me. [She hangs up.]

CHANCE: And I want to borrow your Cadillac for a while. . . .

PRINCESS: What for, Chance?

CHANCE [posturing]: I'm pretentious. I want to be seen in your car on the streets of St Cloud. Drive all around town in it, blowing those long silver trumpets and dressed in the fine clothes you bought me. . . . Can I?



PRINCESS: Chance, you're a lost little boy that I really would like to help find himself.

CHANCE: I passed the screen test!

PRINCESS: Come here, kiss me, I love you.

[She faces the audience.]

Did I say that? Did I mean it?

[Then to Chance with arms outstretched.]

What a child you are. . . . Come here. . . . [He ducks under her arms, and escapes to the chair.]

CHANCE: I want this big display. Big phony display in your Cadillac around town. And a wad of dough to flash in their faces and the fine clothes you've bought me, on me.

PRINCESS: Did I buy you fine clothes?

CHANCE [picking up his jacket from the chair]: The finest. When you stopped being lonely because of my company at that Palm Beach Hotel, you bought me the finest. That's the deal for tonight, to toot those silver horns and drive slowly around in the Cadillac convertible so everybody that thought I was washed up will see me. And I have taken my false or true contract to flash in the faces of various people that called me washed up. All right, that's the deal. Tomorrow you'll get the car back and what's left of your money. Tonight's all that counts.

PRINCESS: How do you know that as soon as you walk out of this room I won't call the police?

CHANCE: You wouldn't do that, Princess. [He puts on his jacket.] You'll find the car in back of the hotel parking lot, and the left-over dough will be in the glove compartment of the car.

PRINCESS: Where will you be?

CHANCE: With my girl, or nowhere.

PRINCESS: Chance Wayne! This was not necessary, all this. I'm not a phony and I wanted to be your friend.

CHANCE: Go back to sleep. As far as I know you're not a bad person, but you just got into bad company on this occasion.

PRINCESS: I am your friend and I'm not a phony.

[Chance turns and goes to the steps.]

When will I see you?

CHANCE [at the top of the steps]: I don't know--maybe never.

PRINCESS: Never is a long time, Chance, I'll wait.

[She throws him a kiss.]

CHANCE: So long.

[The Princess stands looking after him as the lights dim and the curtain closes.]

## Act Two

### SCENE ONE

The terrace of Boss Finley's house, which is a frame house of Victorian Gothic design, suggested by a doorframe at the right and a single white column. As in the other scenes, there are no walls, the action occurring against the sky and sea cyclorama.

The Gulf is suggested by the brightness and the gulls crying as in Act One. There is only essential porch furniture, Victorian wicker but painted bone white. The men should also be wearing white or off-white suits: the tableau is all blue and white, as strict as a canvas of Georgie O'Keefe's.

[At the rise of the curtain, Boss Finley is standing in the center and George Scudder nearby.]

BOSS FINLEY: Chance Wayne had my daughter when she was fifteen.

SCUDDER: That young.

BOSS: When she was fifteen he had her. Know how I know?

Some flashlight photos were made of her, naked, on Diamond Key.

SCUDDER: By Chance Wayne?

BOSS: My little girl was fifteen, barely out of her childhood when--[calling offstage] Charles--

[Charles enters]

BOSS: Call Miss Heavenly--

CHARLES [concurrently]: Miss Heavenly. Miss Heavenly. Your daddy wants to see you.

[Charles leaves.]

BOSS [to Scudder]: By Chance Wayne? Who the hell else do you reckon? I seen them. He had them developed by some studio in Pass Christian that made more copies of them than Chance Wayne ordered and these photos were circulated. I seen them. That was when I first warned the son-of-a-bitch to git out of St Cloud. But he's back in St Cloud right now. I tell you--

SCUDDER: Boss, let me make a suggestion. Call off this rally, I mean your appearance at it, and take it easy tonight. Go out on your boat, you and Heavenly take a short cruise on THE STARFISH

BOSS: I'm not about to start sparing myself. Oh, I know, I'll have me a coronary and go like that. But not because Chance Wayne had the unbelievable gall to come back to St Cloud.

[Calling offstage]

Tom Junior!

TOM JUNIOR [offstage]: Yes, sir!

BOSS: Has he checked out yet?

TOM JUNIOR [entering]: Hatcher says he called their room at the Royal Palms, and Chance Wayne answered the phone, and Hatcher says . . .

BOSS: Hatcher says--who's Hatcher?

TOM JUNIOR: Dan Hatcher.

BOSS: I hate to expose my ignorance like this but the name Dan Hatcher has no more meaning to me than the name of Hatcher, which is none whatsoever.

SCUDDER [quietly, deferentially]: Hatcher, Dan Hatcher, is the assistant manager of the Royal Palms Hotel, and the man that informed me this morning that Chance Wayne was back in St Cloud.

BOSS: Is this Hatcher a talker, or can he keep his mouth shut?

SCUDDER: I think I impressed him how important it is to handle this thing discreetly.

BOSS: Discreetly, like you handled that operation you done on my daughter, so discreetly that a hillbilly heckler is shouting me questions about it wherever I speak?

SCUDDER: I went to fantastic lengths to preserve the secrecy of that operation.

TOM JUNIOR: When Papa's upset he hits out at anyone near him.

BOSS: I just want to know--Has Wayne left?

TOM JUNIOR: Hatcher says that Chance Wayne told him that this old movie star that he's latched on to . . .

SCUDDER: Alexandra Del Lago.

TOM JUNIOR: She's not well enough to travel.

BOSS: Okay, you're a doctor, remove her to a hospital. Call an ambulance and haul her out of the Royal Palms Hotel.

SCUDDER: Without her consent?

BOSS: Say she's got something contagious, typhoid, bubonic plague. Haul her out and slap a quarantine oh her hospital door. That way you can separate them. We can remove Chance Wayne from St Cloud as soon as this Miss Del Lago is removed from Chance Wayne.

SCUDDER: I'm not so sure that's the right way to go about it.

BOSS: Okay, you think of a way. My daughter's no whore, but she had a whore's operation after the last time he had her. I don't want him passin' another night in St Cloud. Tom Junior.

TOM JUNIOR: Yes, sir.

BOSS: I want him gone by tomorrow--tomorrow commences at midnight.

TOM JUNIOR: I know what to do, Papa. Can I use the boat?

BOSS: Don't ask me, don't tell me nothin'--

TOM JUNIOR: Can I have the Starfish tonight?

BOSS: I don't want to know how, just go about it. Where's your sister?

[Charles appears on the gallery, points out Heavenly lying on the beach to Boss and exits.]

TOM JUNIOR: She's lyin' out on the beach like a dead body washed up on it.

BOSS [calling]: Heavenly!

TOM JUNIOR: Gawge, I want you with me on this boat trip tonight, Gawge.

BOSS [calling]: Heavenly!

SCUDDER: I know what you mean, Tom Junior, but I couldn't be involved in it. I can't even know about it.

BOSS [calling again]: Heavenly!

TOM JUNIOR: Okay, don't be involved in it. There's a pretty fair doctor that lost his license for helping a girl out of trouble, and he won't be so goddam finicky about doing this absolutely just thing.

SCUDDER: I don't question the moral justification, which is complete without question. . . .

TOM JUNIOR: Yeah, complete without question.

SCUDDER: But I am a reputable doctor, I haven't lost my license. I'm chief of staff at the great hospital put up by your father. . . .

TOM JUNIOR: I said, don't know about it.

SCUDDER: No, sir, I won't know about it . . . [Boss starts to cough.] I can't afford to, and neither can your father. . . .

[Scudder goes to gallery writing prescription.]

BOSS: Heavenly! Come up here, sugar. [To Scudder]

What's that you're writing?

SCUDDER: Prescription for that cough.

BOSS: Tear it up, throw it away. I've hawked and spit all my life, and I'll be hawking and spitting in the hereafter.

You all can count on that.

[Auto horn is heard.]

TOM JUNIOR [leaps up on the gallery and starts to leave]: Papa, he's drivin' back by.

BOSS: Tom Junior.

[Tom Junior stops.]

TOM JUNIOR: Is Chance Wayne insane?

SCUDDER: Is a criminal degenerate sane or insane is a question that lots of law courts haven't been able to settle.

BOSS: Take it to the Supreme Court, they'll hand you down a decision on that question. They'll tell you a handsome young criminal degenerate like Chance Wayne is the mental and moral equal of any white man in the country.

TOM JUNIOR: He's stopped at the foot of the drive.

BOSS: Don't move, don't move, Tom Junior.

TOM JUNIOR: I'm not movin', Papa.

CHANCE [offstage]: Aunt Nonnie! Hey, Aunt Nonnie!

BOSS: What's he shouting?

TOM JUNIOR: He's shouting at Aunt Nonnie.

BOSS: Where is she?

TOM JUNIOR: Runnin' up the drive like a dog-track rabbit.

BOSS: He ain't following is he?

TOM JUNIOR: Nope. He's drove away.

[Aunt Nonnie appears before the veranda, terribly flustered, rooting in her purse for something, apparently blind to the men on the veranda,]

BOSS: Whatcha lookin' for, Nonnie?

NONNIE [stopping short]: Oh--I didn't notice you, Tom. I was looking for my door-key.

BOSS: Door's open, Nonnie, it's wide open, like a church door.

NONNIE [laughing]: Oh, ha, ha . . .

BOSS: Why didn't you answer that good-lookin' boy in the Cadillac car that shouted at you, Nonnie?

NONNIE: Oh. I hoped you hadn't seen him. [Draws a deep breath and comes on to the terrace, closing her white purse.]

That was Chance Wayne. He's back in St Cloud, he's at the Royal Palms, he's--

BOSS: Why did you snub him like that? After all these years of devotion?

NONNIE: I went to the Royal Palms to warn him not to play here but--

BOSS: He was out showing off in that big white Cadillac with the trumpet horns on it.

NONNIE: I left a message for him, I--

TOM JUNIOR: What was the message, Aunt Nonnie? Love and kisses?

NONNIE: Just get out of St Cloud right away, Chance.

TOM JUNIOR: He's gonna git out, but not in that fish-tail Caddy.

NONNIE [to Tom Junior]: I hope you don't mean violence--[turning to Boss] does he, Tom? Violence don't solve problems. It never solves young people's problems. If you will leave it to me, I'll get him out of St Cloud. I can, I will, I promise. I don't think Heavenly knows he's back in St Cloud. Tom, you know, Heavenly says it wasn't Chance that--She says it wasn't Chance.

BOSS: You're like your dead sister, Nonnie, gullible as my wife was. You don't know a lie if you bump into it on a street in the daytime. Now go out there and tell Heavenly I want to see her.

NONNIE: Tom, she's not well enough to--

BOSS: Nonnie, you got a whole lot to answer for.

NONNIE: Have I?

BOSS: Yes, you sure have, Nonnie. You favored Chance Wayne, encouraged, aided, and abetted him in his corruption of Heavenly over a long, long time. You go get her. You sure do have a lot to answer for. You got a helluva lot to answer for.

NONNIE: I remember when Chance was the finest, nicest, sweetest boy in St Cloud, and he stayed that way till you, till you--

BOSS: Go get her, go get her!

[She leaves by the far side of the terrace. After a moment her voice is heard calling, 'Heavenly? Heavenly?']

It's a curious thing, a mighty peculiar thing, how often a man that rises to high public office is drug back down by every soul he harbors under his roof. He harbors them under his roof, and they pull the roof down on him. Every last living one of them.

TOM JUNIOR: Does that include me, Papa?

BOSS: If the shoe fits, put it on you.

TOM JUNIOR: How does that shoe fit me?

BOSS: If it pinches your foot, just slit it down the sides a little--it'll feel comfortable on you.

TOM JUNIOR: Papa, you are UNJUST.

BOSS: What do you want credit for?

TOM JUNIOR: I have devoted the past year to organizin' the 'Youth for Tom Finley' clubs.

BOSS: I'm carryin' Tom Finley Junior on my ticket.

TOM JUNIOR: You're lucky to have me on it.

BOSS: How do you figure I'm lucky to have you on it?

TOM JUNIOR: I got more newspaper coverage in the last six months than . . .

BOSS: Once for drunk drivin', once for a stag party you thrown in Capitol City that cost me five thousand dollars to hush it up!

TOM JUNIOR: You are so unjust, it . . .

BOSS: And everyone knows you had to be drove through school like a blazeface mule pullin' a plough uphill: flunked out of college with grades that only a moron would have an excuse for.

TOM JUNIOR: I got re-admitted to college.

BOSS: At my insistence. By fake examinations, answers provided beforehand, stuck in your fancy pockets. And your promiscuity. Why, these 'Youth for Tom Finley' clubs are practically nothin' but gangs of juvenile delinquents, wearin' badges with my name and my photograph on them.

TOM JUNIOR: How about your well-known promiscuity, Papa? How about your Miss Lucy?

BOSS: Who is Miss Lucy?



TOM JUNIOR [laughing so hard he staggers]: Who is Miss Lucy? You don't even know who she is, this woman you keep in a fifty-dollar-a-day hotel suite at the Royal Palms, Papa?

BOSS: What're you talkin' about?

TOM JUNIOR: That rides down the Gulf Stream Highway with a motor-cycle escort blowin' their sirens like the Queen of Sheba was going into New Orleans for the day. To use her charge accounts there. And you ask who's Miss Lucy? She don't even talk good of you. She says you're too old for a lover.

BOSS: That is a goddam lie. Who says Miss Lucy says that?

TOM JUNIOR: She wrote it with lipstick on the ladies' room mirror at the Royal Palms.

BOSS: Wrote what?

TOM JUNIOR: I'll quote it to you exactly. 'Boss Finley,' she wrote, 'is too old to cut the mustard.'

[Pause: the two stags, the old and the young one, face each other, panting, Scudder has discreetly withdrawn to a far end of porch.]

BOSS: I don't believe this story!

TOM JUNIOR: Don't believe it.

BOSS: I will check on it, however.

TOM JUNIOR: I already checked on it. Papa, why don't you get rid of her, huh, Papa?

[Boss Finley turns away, wounded, baffled: stares out at the audience with his old, bloodshot eyes as if he thought that someone out there had shouted a question at him which he didn't quite hear.]

BOSS: Mind your own goddam business. A man with a mission, which he holds sacred, and on the strength of which he rises to high public office--crucified in this way, publicly, by his own offspring,

[Heavenly has entered on the gallery.]

Ah, here she is, here's my little girl. [Stopping Heavenly] You stay here, honey. I think you all had better leave me alone with Heavenly now, huh--yeah. . . .

Tom Junior and Scudder exit.]

Now, honey, you stay here. I want to have a talk with you.

HEAVENLY: Papa, I can't talk now.

BOSS: It's necessary.

HEAVENLY: I can't, I can't talk now.

BOSS: All right, don't talk, just listen.

[But she doesn't want to listen, starts away. He would have restrained her forcibly if an old colored manservant, Charles, had not, at that moment, come out on the porch. He carries a stick, a hat, a package, wrapped as a present. Puts them on a table.]

CHARLES: It's five o'clock, Mister Finley.

BOSS: Huh? Oh--thanks . . .

[Charles turns on a coach lamp by the door. This marks a formal division in the scene. The light change is not realistic; the light doesn't seem to come from the coach lamp but from a spectral radiance in the sky, flooding the terrace.

The sea wind sings, Heavenly lifts her face to it. Later that night may be stormy, but now there is just a quickness and freshness coming in from the Gulf. Heavenly is always looking that way, towards the Gulf, so that the light from Point Lookout catches her face with its repeated soft stroke of clarity.

In her father, a sudden dignity is revived. Looking at his very beautiful daughter, he becomes almost stately. He approaches her, as soon as the colored man returns inside, like an aged courtier comes deferentially up to a Crown Princess or Infanta. It's important not to think of his attitude towards her in the terms of crudely conscious incestuous feeling, but just in the natural terms of almost any aging father's feeling for a beautiful young daughter who reminds him of a dead wife that he desired intensely when she was the age of his daughter.

At this point there might be a phrase of stately, Mozartian music, suggesting a court dance. The flagged terrace may suggest the parquet floor of a ballroom and the two players' movements may suggest the stately, formal movements of a court dance of that time; but if this effect is used, it should be just a suggestion. The change towards 'stylization' ought to be held in check.]

BOSS: You're still a beautiful girl.

HEAVENLY: Am I, Papa?

BOSS: Of course you are. Lookin' at you nobody could guess that--

HEAVENLY [laughs]: The embalmers must have done a good job on me, Papa. . . .

BOSS: You got to quit talkin' like that.

[Then, seeing Charles] Will you get back in the house!

[Phone rings.]

CHARLES: Yes, sir, I was just--

BOSS: Go on in! If that phone-call is for me, I'm in only to the governor of the state and the president of the Tidewater Oil Corporation.

CHARLES [offstage]: It's for Miss Heavenly again.

BOSS: Say she ain't in.

CHARLES: Sorry, she ain't in.

[Heavenly has moved upstage to the low parapet or sea wall that separates the courtyard and lawn from the beach. It is early dusk. The coach lamp has cast a strange light on the setting which is neo-romantic; Heavenly stops by an ornamental urn containing a tall fern that the salty Gulf wind has stripped nearly bare. The Boss follows her, baffled.]

BOSS: Honey, you say and do things in the presence of people as if you had no regard of the fact that people have ears to hear you and tongues to repeat what they hear. And so you become a issue.

HEAVENLY: Become what, Papa?

BOSS: A issue, a issue, subject of talk, of scandal--which can defeat the mission that--

HEAVENLY: Don't give me your 'Voice of God' speech. Papa, there was a time when you could have saved me, by letting me marry a boy that was still young and clean, but instead you drove him away, drove him out of St Cloud. And when he came back, you took me out of St Cloud, and tried to force me to marry a fifty-year-old money bag that you wanted something out of--

BOSS: Now, honey--

HEAVENLY: --and then another, another, all of them ones that you wanted something out of. I'd gone, so Chance went away. Tried to compete, make himself big as these big-shots you wanted to use me for a bond with. He went. He tried. The right doors wouldn't open, and so he went in the wrong ones, and--Papa, you married for love, why wouldn't you let me do it, while I was alive, inside, and the boy still clean, still decent?

BOSS: Are you reproaching me for--?

HEAVENLY [shouting]: Yes, I am, Papa, I am. You married for love, but you wouldn't let me do it, and even though you'd done it, you broke Mama's heart, Miss Lucy had been your mistress --

BOSS: Who is Miss Lucy?

HEAVENLY: Oh, Papa, she was your mistress long before Mama died. And Mama was just a front for you. Can I go in now, Papa? Can I go in now?

BOSS: No, no, not till I'm through with you. What a terrible, terrible thing for my baby to say . . .

[He takes her in his arms.]

Tomorrow, tomorrow morning, when the big after-Easter sales commence in the stores--I'm gonna send you--in town with a motor-cycle escort, straight to the Maison Blanche. When you arrive at the store, I want you to go directly up to the office of Mr Harvey C. Petrie and tell him to give you unlimited credit there. Then go down and outfit yourself as if you was--buyin' a trousseau to marry the Prince of Monaco. . . . Purchase a full wardrobe, includin' furs. Keep 'em in storage until winter. Gown? Three, four, five, the most lavish. Slippers? Hell, pairs and pairs of 'em. Not one hat--but a dozen. I made a pile of dough on a deal involvin' the sale of rights to oil under water here lately, and, baby, I want you to buy a piece of jewelry. Now about that, you better tell Harvey to call me. Or better still, maybe Miss Lucy had better help you select it. She's wise as a backhouse rat when it comes to a stone--that's for sure. . . . Now where'd I buy that clip that I give your mama? D'you remember the clip I bought your mama? Last thing I give your mama before she died. . . . I knowed she was dyin' when I bought her that clip, and I bought that clip for fifteen thousand dollars mainly to make her think she was going to get well. . . . When I pinned it on her on the nightgown she was wearing, that poor thing started crying. She said, for God's sake, Boss, what does a dying woman want with such a big diamond? I said to her, honey, look at the price tag on it. What does the price tag say? See them five figures, that one and that five and them three oughts on there? Now, honey, make sense, I told her. If you was dying, if there was any chance of it, would I invest fifteen grand in a diamond clip to pin on the neck of a shroud? Ha, haha. That made the old lady laugh. And she sat up as bright as a little bird in that bed with the diamond clip on, receiving callers all day, and laughing and chatting with them, with that diamond clip on inside and she died before midnight, with that diamond clip on her. And not till the very last minute did she believe that the diamonds wasn't a proof that she wasn't dying.

[He moves to terrace, takes off robe, and starts to put on tuxedo coat.]

HEAVENLY: Did you bury her with it?

BOSS: Bury her with it? Hell, no. I took it back to the jewelry store in the morning.

HEAVENLY: Then it didn't cost you fifteen grand after all.

BOSS: Hell, did I care what it cost me? I'm not a small man. I wouldn't have cared one hoot if it cost me a million . . . if at that time I had that kind of loot in my pockets. It would have been worth that money to see that one little smile your mama bird give me at noon of the day she was dying.

HEAVENLY: I guess that shows, demonstrates very dearly, that you have got a pretty big heart after all.

BOSS: Who doubts it then? Who? Who ever? [He laughs.]

[Heavenly starts to laugh and then screams hysterically. She starts going towards the house. Boss throws down his cane and grabs her.]

Just a minute, Missy. Stop it. Stop it. Listen to me, I'm gonna tell you something. Last week in New Bethesda, when I was speaking on the threat of desegregation to white women's chastity in the South, some heckler in the crowd shouted out, 'Hey, Boss Finley, how about your daughter? How about that operation you had done on your daughter at the Thomas J. Finley hospital in St Cloud? Did she put on black in mourning for her appendix?' Same heckler, same question when I spoke in the Coliseum at the state capitol.

HEAVENLY: What was your answer to him?

BOSS: He was removed from the hall at both places and roughed up a little outside it.

HEAVENLY: Papa, you have got an illusion of power.

BOSS: I have power, which is not an illusion.

HEAVENLY: Papa, I'm sorry my operation has brought this embarrassment on you, but can you imagine it, Papa? I felt worse than embarrassed when I found out that Dr George Scudder's knife had cut the youth out of my body, made me an old childless woman. Dry, cold, empty, like an old woman. I feel as if I ought to rattle like a dead dried-up vine when the Gulf wind blows, but, Papa--I won't embarrass you any more. I've made up my mind about something. If they'll let me, accept me, I'm going into a convent.

BOSS [shouting]: You ain't going into no convent. This state is a Protestant region and a daughter in a convent would politically ruin me. Oh, I know, you took your mama's religion because in your heart you always wished to defy me. Now, tonight, I'm addressing the 'Youth for Tom Finley' clubs in the ballroom of the Royal Palms Hotel. My speech is going out over a national TV network, and Missy, you're going to march in the ballroom on my arm. You're going to be wearing the stainless white of a virgin, with a 'Youth for Tom Finley' button on one shoulder and a corsage of lilies on the other. You're going to be on the speaker's platform with me, you on one side of me and Tom Junior on the other, to scotch these rumors about your corruption. And you're gonna wear a proud happy smile on your face, you're gonna stare straight out at the crowd in the ballroom with pride and joy in your eyes. Lookin' at you, all in white like a virgin, nobody would dare to speak or believe the ugly stories about you. I'm

relying a great deal on this campaign to bring in young voters for the crusade I'm leading. I'm all that stands between the South and the black days of Reconstruction. And you and Tom Junior are going to stand there beside me in the grand crystal ballroom, as shining examples of white Southern youth--in danger.

HEAVENLY [defiant]: Papa, I'm not going to do it.

BOSS: I didn't say would you, I said you would, and you will.

HEAVENLY: Suppose I still say I won't.

BOSS: Then you won't, that's all. If you won't, you won't. But there would be consequences you might not like.

[Phone rings.]

Chance Wayne is back in St Cloud.

CHARLES [offstage]: Mr Finley's residence. Miss Heavenly? Sorry, she's not in.

BOSS: I'm going to remove him, he's going to be removed from St Cloud. How do you want him to leave, in that white Cadillac he's riding around in, or in the scow that totes the garbage out to the dumping place in the Gulf?

HEAVENLY: You wouldn't dare.

BOSS: You want to take a chance on it!

CHARLES [enters]: That call was for you again, Miss Heavenly.

BOSS: A lot of people approve of taking violent action against corrupters. And on all of them that want to adulterate the pure white blood of the South. Hell, when I was fifteen, I come down barefoot out of the red clay hills as if the Voice of God called me. Which it did, I believe. I firmly believe He called me. And nothing, nobody, nowhere is gonna stop me, never. . . .

[He motions to Charles for gift, Charles hands it to him.] Thank you, Charles. I'm gonna pay me an early call on Miss Lucy.

[A sad, uncertain note has come into his voice on this final line. He turns and plods wearily, doggedly off at left. the curtain falls House remains dark for short intermission!]

SCENE TWO

A corner of cocktail lounge and of outside gallery of the Royal Palms Hotel. This corresponds in style to the bedroom set: Victorian with Moorish influence. Royal palms are projected on the cyclorama which is deep violet with dusk. There are Moorish arches between gallery and interior: over the single table, inside, is suspended the same lamp, stained glass, and ornately wrought metal, that hung in the bedroom. Perhaps on the gallery there is a low stone balustrade that supports, where steps descend into the garden, an electric-light standard with five branches and pear-shaped globes of a dim pearly luster. Somewhere out of the sight-lines an entertainer plays a piano or novachord.

[The interior table is occupied by two couples that represent society in St Cloud. They are contemporaries of Chance's. Behind the bar is Stuff who feels the dignity of his recent advancement from drugstore soda-fountain to the Royal Palms cocktail lounge: he has on a white mess-jacket, a scarlet cummerbund, and light-blue trousers, flatteringly close-fitted, Chance Wayne was once barman here; Stuff moves with an indolent male grace that he may have unconsciously remembered admiring in Chance.

Boss Finley's mistress, Miss Lucy, enters the cocktail lounge dressed in a ball gown elaborately ruffled and very bouffant like an antebellum Southern belle's. A single blonde curl is arranged to switch girlishly at one side of her sharp little terrier face. She is outraged over something and her glare is concentrated on Stuff who 'plays it cool' behind the bar.]

STUFF: Ev'nin', Miss Lucy.

MISS LUCY: I wasn't allowed to sit at the banquet table. No. I was put at a little side-table, with a couple of state legislators an' wives. [She sweeps behind the bar in a proprietary fashion.] Where's your Grant's twelve-year-old? Hey! Do you have a big mouth? I used to remember a kid that jerked sodas at Walgreen's that had a big mouth. . . . Put some ice in this. . . . Is yours big, huh? I want to tell you something.

STUFF: What's the matter with your finger?

[She catches him by his scarlet cummerbund.]

MISS LUCY: I'm going to tell you just now. The Boss came over to me with a big candy Easter egg for me. The top of the egg unscrewed. He told me to unscrew it. So I unscrewed it. Inside was a little blue velvet jewel box, no not little, a big one, as big as somebody's mouth, too.

STUFF: Whose mouth?

MISS LUCY: The mouth of somebody who's not a hundred miles from here.

STUFF [going off at the left]: I got to set my chairs.

[Stuff re-enters at once carrying two chairs. Sets them at tables while Miss Lucy talks.]

MISS LUCY: I open the jewel box an' start to remove the great big diamond clip in it. I just got my fingers on it, and start to remove it and the old son of a bitch slams the lid of the box on my

fingers. One fingernail is still blue. And the Boss says to me, 'Now go downstairs to the cocktail lounge and go in the ladies' room and describe this diamond clip with lipstick on the ladies' room mirror down there. Hanh?'--and he put the jewel box in his pocket and slammed the door so hard goin' out of my suite that a picture fell off the wall.

STUFF [setting the chairs at the table]: Miss Lucy, you are the one that said, 'I wish you would see what's written with lipstick on the ladies' room mirror' las' Saturday night.

MISS LUCY: To you! Because I thought I could trust you.

STUFF: Other people were here an' all of them heard it.

MISS LUCY: Nobody but you at the bar belonged to the 'Youth for Boss Finley' Club.

[Both stop short. They've noticed a tall man who has entered the cocktail lounge. He has the length and leanness and luminous pallor of face that El Greco gave to his saints. He has a small bandage near the hairline. His clothes are country.]

Hey, you.

HECKLER: Evenin', ma'am.

MISS LUCY: You with the Hillbilly Ramblers? You with the band?

HECKLER: I'm a hillbilly, but I'm not with no band.

[He notices Miss Lucy's steady, interested stare, Stuff leaves with a tray of drinks.]

MISS LUCY: What do you want here?

HECKLER: I come to hear Boss Finley talk. [His voice is clear but strained. He rubs his large Adam's apple as he speaks.]

MISS LUCY: You can't get in the ballroom without a jacket and a tie on. . . . I know who you are. You're the heckler, aren't you?

HECKLER: I don't heckle. I just ask questions, one question or two or three questions, depending on how much time it takes them to grab me and throw me out of the hall.

MISS LUCY: Those questions are loaded questions. You gonna repeat them tonight?

HECKLER: Yes, ma'am, if I can get in the ballroom, and make myself heard.

MISS LUCY: What's wrong with your voice?



HECKLER: When I shouted my questions in New Bethesda last week I got hit in the Adam's apple with the butt of a pistol, and that affected my voice. It still ain't good, but it's better. [Starts to go.]

MISS LUCY [goes to back of bar, where she gets jacket, the kind kept in places with dress regulations, and throws it to heckler]: Wait. Here, put this on. The Boss's talking on a national TV hookup tonight. There's a tie in the pocket. You sit perfectly still at the bar till the Boss starts speaking. Keep your face back of this Evening Banner. Okay?

HECKLER [opening the paper in front of his face]: I thank you.

MISS LUCY: I thank you, too, and I wish you more luck than you're likely to have.

[Stuff re-enters and goes to back of the bar.]

FLY [entering on the gallery]: Paging Chance Wayne.

[Auto horn offstage] Mr Chance Wayne, please. Paging Chance Wayne. [He leaves.]

MISS LUCY [to Stuff, who has re-entered]: Is Chance Wayne back in St Cloud?

STUFF: You remember Alexandra Del Lago?

MISS LUCY: I guess I do. I was president of her local fan club. Why?

CHANCE [offstage]: Hey, Boy, park that car up front and don't wrinkle them fenders.

STUFF: She and Chance Wayne checked in here last night.

MISS LUCY: Well I'll be a dawg's mother. I'm going to look into that, [Lucy exits.]

CHANCE [entering and crossing to the bar]: Hey, Stuff! [He takes a cocktail off the bar and sips it.]

STUFF: Put that down. This ain't no cocktail party.

CHANCE: Man, don't you know . . . phew . . . nobody drinks gin martinis with olives. Everybody drinks vodka martinis with lemon twist nowadays, except the squares in St Cloud. When I had your job, when I was the barman here at the Royal Palms, I created that uniform you've got on. . . . I copied it from an outfit Vic Mature wore in a Foreign Legion picture, and I looked better in it than he did, and almost as good in it as you do, ha ha. . . .

AUNT NONNIE [who has entered at the right]: Chance. Chance. . . .

CHANCE: Aunt Nonnie! [to Stuff] Hey, I want a tablecloth on that table, and a bucket of champagne. . . . Mumm's Cordon Rouge. . . .

AUNT NONNIE: You come out here.

CHANCE: But, I just ordered champagne in here. [Suddenly his effusive manner collapses, as she stares at him gravely.]

AUNT NONNIE: I can't be seen talking to you. . . .

[She leads him to one side of the stage. A light change has occurred which has made it a royal palm grove with a bench. They cross to it solemnly, Stuff busies himself at the bar, which is barely lit. After a moment he exits with a few drinks to main body of the cocktail lounge off left. Bar music: 'Quiereme Mucho']

CHANCE [following her]: Why?

AUNT NONNIE: I've got just one thing to tell you, Chance, get out of St Cloud.

CHANCE: Why does everybody treat me like a low criminal in the town I was born in?

AUNT NONNIE: Ask yourself that question, ask your conscience that question.

CHANCE: What question?

AUNT NONNIE: You know, and I know you know. . . .

CHANCE: Know what?

AUNT NONNIE: I'm not going to talk about it. I just can't talk about it. Your head and your tongue run wild. You can't be trusted. We have to live in St Cloud. . . . Oh, Chance, why have you changed like you've changed? Why do you live on nothing but wild dreams now, and have no address where anybody can reach you in time to--reach you?

CHANCE: Wild dreams! Yes. Isn't life a wild dream? I never heard a better description of it. . . . [He takes a pill and a swallow from a flask.]

AUNT NONNIE: What did you just take, Chance? You took something out of your pocket and washed it down with liquor.

CHANCE: Yes, I took a wild dream and--washed it down with another wild dream, Aunt Nonnie, that's my life now. . . .

AUNT NONNIE: Why, son?

CHANCE: Oh, Aunt Nonnie, for God's sake, have you forgotten what was expected of me?

AUNT NONNIE: People that loved you expected just one thing of you--sweetness and honesty and . . .

[Stuff leaves with tray.]

CHANCE [kneeling at her side]: No, not after the brilliant beginning I made. Why, at seventeen, I put on, directed, and played the leading role in *The Valiant*, that one-act play that won the state drama contest. Heavenly played in it with me, and have you forgotten? You went with us as the girls' chaperon to the national contest held in . . .

AUNT NONNIE: Son, of course I remember.

CHANCE: In the parlor car? How we sang together?

AUNT NONNIE: You were in love even then.

CHANCE: God, yes, we were in love!

[He sings softly]

'If you like-a me, like I like-a you,  
And we like-a both the same'

TOGETHER:

I'd like-a say, this very day,  
I'd like-a change your name.'

[Chance laughs softly, wildly, in the cool light of the palm grove, Aunt Nonnie rises abruptly, Chance catches her hands.]

AUNT NONNIE: You--Do--Take unfair advantage. . . .

CHANCE: Aunt Nonnie, we didn't win that lousy national contest, we just placed second.

AUNT NONNIE: Chance, you didn't place second. You got honorable mention. Fourth place, except it was just called honorable mention.

CHANCE: Just honorable mention. But in a national contest, honorable mention means something. . . . We would have won it, but I blew my lines. Yes, I that put on and produced the damn thing, couldn't even hear the damn lines being hissed at me by that fat girl with the book in the wings. [He buries his face in his hands.]

AUNT NONNIE: I loved you for that, son, and so did Heavenly, too.

CHANCE: It was on the way home in the train that she and I--

AUNT NONNIE [with a flurry of feeling]: I know, I--I--

CHANCE [rising]: I bribed the Pullman Conductor to let us use for an hour a vacant compartment on that sad, home-going train--

AUNT NONNIE: I know, I--I--

CHANCE: Gave him five dollars, but that wasn't enough, and so I gave him my wrist-watch, and my collar pin and tie clip and signet ring and my suit, that I'd bought on credit to go to the contest. First suit I'd ever put on that cost more than thirty dollars.

AUNT NONNIE: Don't go back over that.

CHANCE:--To buy the first hour of love that we had together. When she undressed, I saw that her body was just then, barely, beginning to be a woman's and . . .

AUNT NONNIE: Stop, Chance.

CHANCE: I said, oh, Heavenly, no, but she said yes, and I cried in her arms that night, and didn't know that what I was crying for was--youth, that would go.

AUNT NONNIE: It was from that time on, you've changed.

CHANCE: I swore in my heart that I'd never again come in second in any contest, especially not now that Heavenly was my--Aunt Nonnie, look at this contract.

[He snatches out papers and lights lighter.]

AUNT NONNIE: I don't want to see false papers.

CHANCE: These are genuine papers. Look at the notary's seal and the signatures of the three witnesses on them. Aunt Nonnie, do you know who I'm with? I'm with Alexandra Del Lago, the Princess Kosmonopolis is my--

AUNT NONNIE: Is your what?

CHANCE: Patroness! Agent! Producer! She hasn't been seen much lately, but still has influence, power, and money--money that can open all doors. That I've knocked at all these years till my knuckles are bloody.

AUNT NONNIE: Chance, even now, if you came back here simply saying, 'I couldn't remember the lines, I lost the contest, I--failed,' but you've come back here again with--

CHANCE: Will you just listen one minute more? Aunt Nonnie, here is the plan. A local-contest-of-Beauty.

AUNT NONNIE: Oh, Chance.

CHANCE: A local contest of talent that she will win.

AUNT NONNIE: Who?

CHANCE: Heavenly.

AUNT NONNIE: No, Chance. She's not young now, she's faded, she's . . .

CHANCE: Nothing goes that quick, not even youth.

AUNT NONNIE: Yes, it does.

CHANCE: It will come back like magic. Soon as I . . .

AUNT NONNIE: For what? For a fake contest?

CHANCE: For love. The moment I hold her.

AUNT NONNIE: Chance.

CHANCE: It's not going to be a local thing, Aunt Nonnie. It's going to get national coverage. The Princess Kosmonopolis's best friend is that sob sister, Sally Powers. Even you know Sally Powers. Most powerful movie columnist in the world. Whose name is law in the motion . . .

AUNT NONNIE: Chance, lower your voice.

CHANCE: I want people to hear me.

AUNT NONNIE: No, you don't, no you don't. Because if your voice gets to Boss Finley, you'll be in great danger, Chance.

CHANCE: I go back to Heavenly, or I don't. I live or die. There's nothing in between for me.

AUNT NONNIE: What you want to go back to is your clean, unashamed youth. And you can't.

CHANCE: You still don't believe me, Aunt Nonnie?

AUNT NONNIE: No, I don't Please go. Go away from here, Chance.

CHANCE: Please.

AUNT NONNIE: No, no, go away!

CHANCE: Where to? Where can I go? This is the home of my heart. Don't make me homeless.

AUNT NONNIE: Oh, Chance.

CHANCE: Aunt Nonnie. Please.

AUNT NONNIE [rises and starts to go]: I'll write to you. Send me an address. I'll write to you.

[She exits through bar. Stuff enters and moves to bar.]

CHANCE: Aunt Nonnie . . .

[She's gone.

Chance removes a pint bottle of vodka from his pocket and something else which he washes down with the vodka. He stands back as two couples come up the steps and cross the gallery into the bar: they sit at a table, Chance takes a deep breath, Fly enters lighted area inside, singing out 'Paging Mr Chance Wayne, Mr Chance Wayne, pagin' Mr Chance Wayne.'-- Turns about smartly and goes back out through lobby. The name has stirred a commotion at the bar and table visible inside.]

EDNA: Did you hear that? Is Chance Wayne back in St Cloud?

[Chance draws a deep breath. Then, he stalks back into the main part of the cocktail lounge like a matador entering a bull ring.]

VIOLET: My God, yes--there he is.

[Chance reads Fly's message.]

CHANCE [to Fly]: Not now, later, later.

[The entertainer off left begins to play a piano. . . . The 'evening' in the cocktail lounge is just beginning. Fly leaves through the gallery.]

Well! Same old place, same old gang. Time doesn't pass in St Cloud. [To Bud and Scotty] Hi!

BUD: How are you . . . ?

CHANCE [shouting offstage as Fly enters and stands on terrace]: Hey Jackie . . . [Piano stops, Chance crosses over to the table that holds the foursome.] . . . remember my song? Do you--remember my song? . . . You see, he remembers my song. [The entertainer swings into 'It's a Big Wide Wonderful World'.] Now I feel at home. In my home town. . . . Come on, everybody--sing!

[This token of apparent acceptance reassures him. The foursome at the table on stage studiously ignore him. He sings.]

'When you're in love you're a master  
Of all you survey, you're a gay Santa Claus.  
There's a great big star-spangled sky up above you,  
When you're in love you're a hero. . . .'  
Come on! Sing, ev'rybody!

[In the old days they did; now they don't. He goes on, singing a bit; then his voice dies out on a note of embarrassment. Somebody at the bar whispers something and another laughs. Chance chuckles uneasily and speaks.]

What's wrong here? The place is dead.

STUFF: You been away too long, Chance.

CHANCE: Is that the trouble?

STUFF: That's all. . . .

[Jackie, off, finishes with an arpeggio. The piano lid slams. There is a curious hush in the bar. Chance looks at the table, Violet whispers something to Bud. Both girls rise abruptly and cross out of the bar.]

BUD [yelling at Stuff]: Check, Stuff.

CHANCE [with exaggerated surprise]: Well, Bud and Scotty. I didn't see you at all. Wasn't that Violet and Edna at your table? [He sits at the table between Bud and Scotty.]

SCOTTY: I guess they didn't recognize you, Chance,

BUD: Violet did.

SCOTTY: Did Violet?

BUD: She said, 'My God, Chance Wayne!'

SCOTTY: That's recognition and profanity, too.

CHANCE: I don't mind. I've been snubbed by experts, and I've done some snubbing myself. . . . Hey! [Miss Lucy has entered at left, Chance sees her and goes towards her.] --Is that Miss Lucy or is that Scarlett O'Hara?

MISS LUCY: Hello there, Chance Wayne. Somebody said that you were back in St Cloud, but I didn't believe them. I said I'd have to see it with my own eyes before . . . Usually there's an item in the paper, in Gwen Phillips's column saying 'St Cloud youth home on visit is slated to play featured role in important new picture,' and me being a movie fan I'm always thrilled by it. . . . [She ruffles his hair.]

CHANCE: Never do that to a man with thinning hair.

[Chance's smile is unflinching; it gets harder and brighter.]

MISS LUCY: Is your hair thinning, baby? Maybe that's the difference I noticed in your appearance. Don't go 'way till I get back with my drink. . . .

[She goes to back of bar to mix herself a drink. Meanwhile Chance combs his hair.]

SCOTTY [to Chance]: Don't throw away those golden hairs you combed out, Chance. Save 'em and send 'em each in letters to your fan clubs.

BUD: Does Chance Wayne have a fan club?

SCOTTY: The most patient one in the world. They've been waiting years for him to show up on the screen for more than five seconds in a crowd scene.

MISS LUCY [returning to the table]: Y'know, this boy Chance Wayne used to be so attractive I couldn't stand it. But now I can, almost stand it. Every Sunday in summer I used to drive out to the municipal beach and watch him dive off the high tower. I'd take binoculars with me when he put on those free divin' exhibitions. You still dive, Chance? Or have you given that up?

CHANCE [uneasily]: I did some diving last Sunday.

MISS LUCY: Good, as ever?

CHANCE: I was a little off form, but the crowd didn't notice. I can still get away with a double back somersault and a --

MISS LUCY: Where was this, in Palm Beach, Florida, Chance?

[Hatcher enters.]

CHANCE [stiffening]: Why Palm Beach? Why there?

MISS LUCY: Who was it said they seen you last month in Palm Beach? Oh yes, Hatcher--that you had a job as a beach-boy at some big hotel there?

HATCHER [stopping at steps of the terrace, then leaving across the gallery]: Yeah, that's what I heard.

CHANCE: Had a job--as a beach-boy?

STUFF: Rubbing oil into big fat millionaires. Chance! What joker thought up that one? [His laugh is a little too loud.]



SCOTTY: You ought to get their names and sue them for slander.

CHANCE: I long ago gave up tracking down sources of rumors about me. Of course, it's flattering, it's gratifying to know that you're still being talked about in your old home town, even if what they say is completely fantastic. Hahaha.

[Entertainer returns, sweeps into 'Quiereme Mucho']

MISS LUCY: Baby, you've changed in some way, but I can't put my finger on it. You all see a change in him, or has he just gotten older? [She sits down next to Chance.]

CHANCE [quickly]: To change is to live, Miss Lucy, to live is to change, and not to change is to die. You know that, don't you? It used to scare me sometimes. I'm not scared of it now. Are you scared of it, Miss Lucy? Does it scare you?

[Behind Chance's back one of the girls has appeared and signaled the boys to join them outside, Scotty nods and holds up two fingers to mean they'll come in a couple of minutes. The girl goes back out with an angry head-toss.]

SCOTTY: Chance, did you know Boss Finley was holding a 'Youth for Tom Finley' rally upstairs tonight?

CHANCE: I saw the announcements of it all over town.

BUD: He's going to state his position on that emasculation business that's stirred up such a mess in the state. Had you heard about that?

CHANCE: No.

SCOTTY: He must have been up in some earth satellite if he hasn't heard about that.

CHANCE: No, just out of St Cloud.

SCOTTY: Well, they picked out a nigger at random and castrated the bastard to show they mean business about white women's protection in this state.

BUD: Some people think they went too far about it. There's been a whole lot of Northern agitation all over the country.

SCOTTY: The Boss is going to state his own position about that thing before the 'Youth for Boss Finley' rally upstairs in the Crystal Ballroom.

CHANCE: Aw. Tonight?

STUFF: Yeah, t'night.

BUD: They say that Heavenly Finley and Tom Junior are going to be standing on the platform with him.

PAGEBOY [entering]: Paging Chance Wayne, Paging. . . .

[He is stopped short by Edna.]

CHANCE: I doubt that story, somehow I doubt that story.

SCOTTY: You doubt they cut that nigger?

CHANCE: Oh, no, that I don't doubt. You know what that is, don't you? Sex-envy is what that is, and the revenge for sex-envy which is a widespread disease that I have run into personally too often for me to doubt its existence or any manifestation.

[The group push back their chairs, snubbing him. Chance takes the message from the pageboy, reads it, and throws it on the floor.]

Hey, Stuff- What d'ya have to do, stand on your head to get a drink around here?--Later, tell her.--Miss Lucy, can you get that Walgreen's soda jerk to give me a shot of vodka on the rocks? [She snaps her fingers at Stuff. He shrugs and sloshes some vodka on to ice.]

MISS LUCY: Chance? You're too loud, baby.

CHANCE: Not loud enough, Miss Lucy. No. What I meant that I doubt is that Heavenly Finley, that only I know in St Cloud, would stoop to stand on a platform next to her father while he explains and excuses on TV this random emasculation of a young Nigra caught on a street after midnight.

[Chance is speaking with an almost incoherent excitement, one knee resting on the seat of his chair, swaying the chair back and forth. The heckler lowers his newspaper from his face; a slow fierce smile spreads over his face as he leans forward with tensed throat muscles to catch Chance's burst of oratory.]

No! That's what I do not believe. If I believed it, oh, I'd give you a diving exhibition. I'd dive off municipal pier and swim straight out to Diamond Key and past it, and keep on swimming till sharks and barracuda took me for live bait, brother.

[His chair topples over backward, and he sprawls to the floor. The heckler springs up to catch him. Miss Lucy springs up too, and sweeps between Chance and the heckler, pushing the heckler back with a quick, warning look or gesture. Nobody notices the heckler, Chance scrambles back to his feet, flushed, laughing, Bud and Scotty outlaugh him. Chance picks up his chair and continues. The laughter stops.]

Because I have come back to St Cloud to take her out of St Cloud. Where I'll take her is not to a place anywhere except to her place in my heart.

[He has removed a pink capsule from his pocket, quickly and furtively, and drunk it down with his vodka.]

BUD: Chance, what did you swallow just now?

CHANCE: Some hundred-proof vodka.

BUD: You washed something down with it that you took out of your pocket.

SCOTTY: It looked like a little pink pill.

CHANCE: Oh, ha, ha. Yes, I washed down a goof-ball. You want one? I got a bunch of them. I always carry them with me. When you're not having fun, it makes you have it. When you're having fun, it makes you have more of it. Have one and see.

SCOTTY: Don't that damage the brain?

CHANCE: No, the contrary. It stimulates the brain cells.

SCOTTY: Don't it make your eyes look different, Chance?

MISS LUCY: Maybe that's what I noticed. [As if wishing to change the subject] Chance, I wish you'd settle an argument for me.

CHANCE: What argument, Miss Lucy?

MISS LUCY: About who you're travelling with. I heard you checked in here with a famous old movie star.

[They all stare at him. . . . In a way he now has what he wants. He's the center of attraction; everybody is looking at him, even though with hostility, suspicion, and a cruel sense of sport.]

CHANCE: Miss Lucy, I'm travelling with the vice-president and major-stockholder of the film studio which just signed me.

MISS LUCY: Wasn't she once in the movies and very well known?

CHANCE: She was and still is and never will cease to be an important, a legendary figure in the picture industry, here and all over the world, and I am now under personal contract to her.

MISS LUCY: What's her name, Chance?

CHANCE: She doesn't want her name known. Like all great figures, world-known, she doesn't want or need and refuses to have the wrong type of attention. Privacy is a luxury to great stars. Don't ask me her name. I respect her too much to speak her name at this table. I'm obligated to her because she has shown faith in me. It took a long hard time to find that sort of faith in my talent that this woman has shown me. And I refuse to betray it at this table. [His voice rises; he is already 'high'.]

MISS LUCY: Baby, why are you sweating and your hands shaking so? You're not sick, are you?

CHANCE: Sick? Who's sick? I'm the least sick one you know.

MISS LUCY: Well, baby, you know you oughtn't to stay in St Cloud. Y'know that, don't you? I couldn't believe my ears when I heard you were back here. [To the two boys] Could you all believe he was back here?

SCOTTY: What did you come back for?

CHANCE: I wish you would give me one reason why I shouldn't come back to visit the grave of my mother and pick out a monument for her, and share my happiness with a girl that I've loved many years. It's her, Heavenly Finley, that I've fought my way up for, and now that I've made it, the glory will be hers, too. And I've just about persuaded the powers to be to let her appear with me in a picture I'm signed for. Because I . . .

BUD: What is the name of this picture?

CHANCE: . . . Name of it? Youth!

BUD: Just Youth?

CHANCE: Isn't that a great title for a picture introducing young talent? You all look doubtful. If you don't believe me, well, look. Look at this contract. [Removes it from his pocket.]

SCOTTY: You carry the contract with you?

CHANCE: I happen to have it in this jacket pocket.

MISS LUCY: Leaving, Scotty? [Scotty has risen from the table.]

SCOTTY: It's getting too deep at this table.

BUD: The girls are waiting.

CHANCE [quickly]: Gee, Bud, that's a clean set of rags you're wearing, but let me give you a tip for your tailor. A guy of medium stature looks better with natural shoulders, the padding cuts down your height, it broadens your figure, and gives you a sort of squat look.

BUD: Thanks, Chance.

SCOTTY: You got any helpful hints for my tailor, Chance?

CHANCE: Scotty, there's no tailor on earth than can disguise a sedentary occupation.

MISS LUCY: Chance, Baby . . .

CHANCE: You still work down at the bank? You sit on your can all day countin' century notes and once every week they let you slip one in your pockets? That's a fine set-up, Scotty, if you're satisfied with it but it's starting to give you a little pot and a can.

VIOLET [appearing in the door, angry]: Bud! Scotty! Come on.

SCOTTY: I don't get by on my looks, but I drive my own car. It isn't a Caddy, but it's my own car. And if my own mother died, I'll bury her myself; I wouldn't let a church take up a collection to do it.

VIOLET [impatiently]: Scotty, if you all don't come now I'm going home in a taxi.

[The two boys follow her into the Palm Garden. There they can be seen giving their wives cab money, and indicating they are staying.]

CHANCE: The squares have left us, Miss Lucy.

MISS LUCY: Yeah.

CHANCE: Well . . . I didn't come back here to fight with old friends of mine. . . . Well, it's quarter past seven.

MISS LUCY: Is it?

[There are a number of men, now, sitting around in the darker corners of the bar, looking at him. They are not ominous in their attitudes. They are simply waiting for something, for the meeting to start upstairs, for something. . . . Miss Lucy stares at Chance and the men, then again at Chance, nearsightedly, her head cocked like a puzzled terrier's, Chance is discomfited.]

CHANCE: Yep . . . How is that Hickory Hollow for steaks?

Is it still the best place in town for a steak?

STUFF [answering the phone at the bar]: Yeah, it's him. He's here. [Looks at Chance ever so briefly, hangs up.]

MISS LUCY: Baby, I'll go to the checkroom and pick up my wrap and call for my car and I'll drive you out to the airport. They've got an air-taxi out there, a whirly-bird taxi, a helicopter, you know, that'll hop you to New Orleans in fifteen minutes.

CHANCE: I'm not leaving St Cloud. What did I say to make you think I was?

MISS LUCY: I thought you had sense enough to know that you'd better.

CHANCE: Miss Lucy, you've been drinking, it's gone to your sweet little head.

MISS LUCY: Think it over while I'm getting my wrap. You still got a friend in St Cloud.

CHANCE: I still have a girl in St Cloud, and I'm not leaving without her.

PAGEBOY [offstage]: Paging Chance Wayne, Mr Chance Wayne, please.

PRINCESS [entering with pageboy]: Louder, young man, louder. . . . Oh, never mind, here he is!

[But Chance has already rushed out on to the gallery. The Princess looks as if she had thrown on her clothes to escape a building on fire. Her blue-sequined gown is unzipped, or partially zipped, her hair is disheveled, her eyes have a dazed, drugged brightness; she is holding up the eyeglasses with the broken lens, shakily, hanging on to her mink stole with the other hand; her movements are unsteady.]

MISS LUCY: I know who you are. Alexandra Del Lago.

[Loud whispering. A pause.]

PRINCESS [on the step to the gallery]: What? Chance!

MISS LUCY: Honey, let me fix that zipper for you. Hold still just a second. Honey, let me take you upstairs. You mustn't be seen down here in this condition. . . .

[Chance suddenly rushes in from the gallery: he conducts the Princess outside: she is on the verge of panic. The Princess rushes half-down the steps to the palm garden: leans panting on the stone balustrade under the ornamental light standard with its five great pearls of light. The interior is dimmed as Chance comes out behind her.]

PRINCESS: Chance! Chance! Chance! Chance!

CHANCE [softly]: If you'd stayed upstairs that wouldn't have happened to you.

PRINCESS: I did, I stayed.

CHANCE: I told you to wait.

PRINCESS: I waited.

CHANCE: Didn't I tell you to wait till I got back?

PRINCESS: I did, I waited forever, I waited forever for you. Then finally I heard those long sad silver trumpets blowing through the palm garden and then--Chance, the most wonderful thing has happened to me. Will you listen to me? Will you let me tell you?

MISS LUCY [to the group at the bar]: Shhh!

PRINCESS: Chance, when I saw you driving under the window with your head held high, with that terrible stiff-necked pride of the defeated which I know so well; I knew that your come-back had been a failure like mine. And I felt something in my heart for you. That's a miracle, Chance. That's the wonderful thing that happened to me. I felt something for someone besides myself. That means my heart's still alive, at least some part of it is, not all of my heart is dead yet. Part's alive still. . . . Chance, please listen to me. I'm ashamed of this morning. I'll never degrade you again, I'll never degrade myself, you and me, again by--I wasn't always this monster. Once I wasn't this monster. And what I felt in my heart when I saw you returning, defeated, to this palm garden, Chance, gave me hope that I could stop being a monster. Chance, you've got to help me stop being the monster that I was this morning, and you can do it, can help me. I won't be ungrateful for it. I almost died this morning, suffocated in a panic. But even through my panic, I saw your kindness. I saw a true kindness in you that you have almost destroyed, but that's still there, a little. . . .

CHANCE: What kind thing did I do?

PRINCESS: You gave my oxygen to me.

CHANCE: Anyone would do that.

PRINCESS: It could have taken you longer to give it to me.

CHANCE: I'm not that kind of monster.

PRINCESS: You're no kind of monster. You're just--

CHANCE: What?

PRINCESS: Lost in the beanstalk country, the ogre's country at the top of the beanstalk, the country of the flesh-hungry, blood-thirsty ogre--

[Suddenly a voice is heard from off.]

VOICE: Wayne?

[The call is distinct but not loud, Chance hears it, but doesn't turn towards it; he freezes momentarily, like a stag scenting hunters. Among the people gathered inside in the cocktail lounge we see the speaker, Dan Hatcher. In appearance, dress, and manner he is the apotheosis of the assistant hotel manager, about Chance's age, thin, blond-haired, trim blond moustache, suave, boyish, betraying an instinct for murder only by the ruby-glass studs in his matching cuff-links and tie-clip.]

HATCHER: Wayne!

[He steps forward a little and at the same instant Tom Junior and Scotty appear behind him, just in view. Scotty strikes a match for Tom Junior's cigarette as they wait there, Chance suddenly gives the Princess his complete and tender attention, putting an arm around her and turning her towards the Moorish arch to the bar entrance.]

CHANCE [loudly]: I'll get you a drink, and then I'll take you upstairs. You're not well enough to stay down here.

HATCHER [crossing quickly to the foot of the stairs]: Wayne!

[The call is too loud to ignore: Chance half turns and calls back.]

CHANCE: Who's that?

HATCHER: Step down here a minute!

CHANCE: Oh, Hatcher! I'll be right with you.

PRINCESS: Chance, don't leave me alone.

[At this moment the arrival of Boss Finley is heralded by the sirens of several squad cars. The forestage is suddenly brightened from off left, presumably the floodlights of the cars arriving at the entrance to the hotel. This is the signal the men at the bar have been waiting for. Everybody rushes off left. In the hot light all alone on stage is Chance; behind him is the Princess. And the heckler is at the bar. The entertainer plays a feverish tango. Now, off left, Boss Finley can be heard, his public personality very much 'on'. Amid the flash of flash bulbs we hear off:]

BOSS [off]: Hahaha! Little Bit, smile! Go on, smile for the birdie! Ain't she Heavenly, ain't that the right name for her!

HEAVENLY [off]: Papa, I want to go in!

[At this instant she runs in--to face Chance. . . . The heckler rises. For a long instant, Chance and Heavenly stand there: he on the steps leading to the Palm Garden and gallery; she in the cocktail lounge. They simply look at each other . . . the heckler between them. Then the Boss comes in and seizes her by the arm. . . . And there he is facing the heckler and Chance



both. . . . For a split second he faces them, half lifts his cane to strike at them, but doesn't strike . . . then pulls Heavenly back off left stage . . . where the photographing and interviews proceed during what follows, Chance has seen that Heavenly is going to go on the platform with her father. . . . He stands there stunned. . . . ]

PRINCESS: Chance! Chance? [He turns to her blindly.] Call the car and let's go. Everything's packed, even the . . . tape recorder with my shameless voice on it. . . .

[The heckler has returned to his position at the bar. Now Hatcher and Scotty and a couple of other of the boys have come out. . . . The Princess sees them and is silent. . . . She's never been in anything like this before. . . . ]

HATCHER: Wayne, step down here, will you.

CHANCE: What for, what do you want?

HATCHER: Come down here, I'll tell you.

CHANCE: You come up here and tell me.

TOM JUNIOR: Come on, you chicken-gut bastard.

CHANCE: Why, hello, Tom Junior. Why are you hiding down there?

TOM JUNIOR: You're hiding, not me, chicken-gut.

CHANCE: You're in the dark, not me.

HATCHER: Tom Junior wants to talk to you privately down here.

CHANCE: He can talk to me privately up here.

TOM JUNIOR: Hatcher, tell him I'll talk to him in the washroom on the mezzanine floor.

CHANCE: I don't hold conversations with people in washrooms. . . .

[Tom Junior, infuriated, starts to rush forward. Men restrain him.]

What is all this anyhow? It's fantastic. You all having a little conference there? I used to leave places when I was told to. Not now. That time's over. Now I leave when I'm ready. Hear that, Tom Junior? Give your father that message. This is my town. I was born in St Cloud, not him. He was just called here. He was just called down from the hills to preach hate. I was born here to make love. Tell him about that difference between him and me, and ask him which he thinks has more right to stay here. . . . [He gets no answer from the huddled little group which is restraining Tom Junior from perpetrating murder right there in the cocktail lounge. After all, that would be a bad incident to precede the Boss's all-South-wide TV appearance . . . and they

all know it. Chance, at the same time, continues to taunt them.] Tom, Tom Junior! What do you want me for? To pay me back for the ball game and picture-show money I gave you when you were cutting your father's yard grass for a dollar on Saturday? Thank me for the times I gave you my motorcycle and got you a girl to ride the buddy seat with you? Come here! I'll give you the keys to my Caddy. I'll give you the price of any whore in St Cloud. You still got credit with me because you're Heavenly's brother.

TOM JUNIOR [almost bursting free]: Don't say the name of my sister!

CHANCE: I said the name of my girl!

TOM JUNIOR [breaking away from the group]: I'm all right, I'm all right. Leave us alone, will you. I don't want Chance to feel that he's outnumbered. [He herds them out.] Okay? Come on down here.

PRINCESS [trying to restrain Chance]: No, Chance, don't.

TOM JUNIOR: Excuse yourself from the lady and come on down here. Don't be scared to. I just want to talk to you quietly. Just talk. Quiet talk.

CHANCE: Tom Junior, I know that since the last time I was here something has happened to Heavenly and I--

TOM JUNIOR: Don't--speak the name of my sister. Just leave her name off your tongue --

CHANCE: Just tell me what happened to her.

TOM JUNIOR: Just keep your ruttin' voice down.

CHANCE: I know I've done many wrong things in my life, many more than I can name or number, but I swear I never hurt Heavenly in my life.

TOM JUNIOR: You mean to say my sister was had by somebody else--diseased by somebody else the last time you were in St Cloud? . . . I know, it's possible, it's barely possible that you didn't know what you done to my little sister the last time you come to St Cloud. You remember that time when you came home broke? My sister had to pick up your tabs in restaurants and bars, and had to cover bad checks you wrote on banks where you had no accounts. Until you met this rich bitch, Minnie, the Texas one with the yacht, and started spending weekends on her yacht, and coming back Mondays with money from Minnie to go on with my sister. I mean, you'd sleep with Minnie, that slept with any goddam gigolo bastard she could pick up on Bourbon Street or the docks, and then you would go on sleeping again with my sister. And sometime, during that time, you got something besides your gigolo fee from Minnie and passed it on to my sister, my little sister that had hardly even heard of a thing like that, and didn't know what it was till it had gone on too long and--

CHANCE: I left town before I found out I--[The lamentation music is heard.]

TOM JUNIOR: You found out! Did you tell my little sister?

CHANCE: I thought if something was wrong she'd write me or call me--

TOM JUNIOR: How could she write you or call you, there're no addresses, no phone numbers in gutters. I'm itching to kill you--here, on this spot! . . . My little sister, Heavenly, didn't know about the diseases and operations of whores, till she had to be cleaned and cured--I mean spayed like a dawg by Dr George Scudder's knife. That's right--by the knife! . . . And tonight--if you stay here tonight, if you're here after this rally, you're gonna get the knife, too. You know? The knife? That's all. Now go on back to the lady, I'm going back to my father, [Tom Junior exits.]

PRINCESS [as Chance returns to her]: Chance, for God's sake, let's go now. . . .

[The 'Lament' is in the air. It blends with the wind-blown sound of the palms.]

All day I've kept hearing a sort of lament that drifts through the air of this place. It says, 'Lost, lost, never to be found again.' Palm gardens by the sea and olive groves on Mediterranean islands all have that lament drifting through them. 'Lost, lost'. . . . The isle of Cyprus, Monte Carlo, San Remo, Torremolenas, Tangiers. They're all places of exile from whatever we loved. Dark glasses, wide-brimmed hats, and whispers, 'Is that her?' Shocked whispers. . . . Oh, Chance, believe me, after failure comes flight. Nothing ever comes after failure but flight. Face it. Call the car, have them bring down the luggage, and let's go on along the Old Spanish Trail. [She tries to hold him.]

CHANCE: Keep your grabbing hands off me.

[Marchers offstage start to sing 'Bonnie Blue Flag'.]

PRINCESS: There's no one but me to hold you back from destruction in this place.

CHANCE: I don't want to be held.

PRINCESS: Don't leave me. If you do I'll turn into the monster again. I'll be the first lady of the Beanstalk Country.

CHANCE: Go back to the room.

PRINCESS: I'm going nowhere alone. I can't.

CHANCE [in desperation]: Wheel chair! [Marchers enter from the left. Tom Junior and Boss with them.] Wheel chair!

Stuff, get the lady a wheel chair! She's having another attack!

[Stuff and a bellboy catch at her . . . but she pushes Chance away and stares at him reproachfully. . . . The bellboy takes her by the arm. She accepts this anonymous arm and exits, Chance and the heckler are alone on stage.]

CHANCE [as if reassuring, comforting somebody besides himself]: It's all right, I'm alone now, nobody's hanging on to me.

[He is panting. Loosens his tie and collar. Band in the Crystal Ballroom, muted, strikes up a likely but lyrically distorted variation of some such popular tune as the 'Lichtensteiner Polka', Chance turns towards the sound. Then, from left stage, comes a drum majorette, bearing a gold and purple silk banner inscribed, 'Youth for Tom Finley', prancing and followed by Boss Finley, Heavenly, and Tom Junior, with a tight grip on her arm, as if he were conducting her to a death chamber.]

TOM JUNIOR: Papa? Papa! Will you tell Sister to march?

BOSS: Little Bit, you hold you haid up high when we march into that ballroom. [Music up high . . . They march up the steps and on to the gallery in the rear . . . then start across it. The Boss calling out] Now march! [And they disappear up the stairs.]

VOICE [offstage]: Now let us pray. [There is a prayer mumbled by many voices.]

MISS LUCY [who has remained behind]: You still want to try it?

HECKLER: I'm going to take a shot at it. How's my voice?

MISS LUCY: Better.

HECKLER: I better wait here till he starts talkin', huh?

MISS LUCY: Wait till they turn down the chandeliers in the ballroom. . . . Why don't you switch to a question that won't hurt his daughter?

HECKLER: I don't want to hurt his daughter. But he's going to hold her up as the fair white virgin exposed to black lust in the South, and that's his build-up, his lead into his Voice of God speech.

MISS LUCY: He honestly believes it.

HECKLER: I don't believe it. I believe that the silence of God, the absolute speechlessness of Him is a long, long and awful thing that the whole world is lost because of.

I think it's yet to be broken to any man, living or any yet lived on earth--no exceptions, and least of all Boss Finley.

[Stuff enters, goes to table, starts to wipe it. The chandelier lights go down.]

MISS LUCY [with admiration]: It takes a hillbilly to cut down a hillbilly. . . . [to Stuff] Turn on the television, baby.

VOICE [offstage]: I give you the beloved Thomas J. Finley.

[Stuff makes a gesture as if to turn on the TV, which we play in the fourth wall. A wavering beam of light, flickering, narrow, intense, comes from the balcony rail, Stuff moves his head so that he's in it, looking into it. . . . Chance walks slowly downstage, his head also in the narrow flickering beam of light. As he walks downstage, there suddenly appears on the big TV screen, which is the whole back wall of the stage, the image of Boss Finley. His arm is around Heavenly and he is speaking. . . . When Chance sees the Boss's arm around Heavenly, he makes a noise in his throat like a hard fist hit him low. . . . Now the sound, which always follows the picture by an instant, comes on . . . loud.]

BOSS [on TV screen]: Thank you, my friends, neighbors, kinfolk, fellow Americans. . . . I have told you before, but I will tell you again. I got a mission that I hold sacred to perform in the Southland. When I was fifteen I came down barefooted out of the red clay hills . . . . Why? Because the Voice of God called me to execute this mission.

MISS LUCY [to Stuff]: He's too loud.

HECKLER: Listen!

BOSS: And what is this mission? I have told you before but I will tell you again. To shield from pollution a blood that I think is not only sacred to me, but sacred to Him.

[Upstage we see the heckler step up the last steps and makes a gesture as if he were throwing doors open. . . . He advances into the hall, out of our sight.]

MISS LUCY: Turn it down, Stuff.

STUFF [motioning to her]: Shh!

BOSS: Who is the colored man's best friend in the South? That's right . . .

MISS LUCY: Stuff, turn down the volume.

BOSS: It's me, Tom Finley. So recognized by both races.

STUFF [shouting]: He's speaking the word. Pour it on!

BOSS: However--I can't and will not accept, tolerate, condone this threat of a blood pollution.

[Miss Lucy turns down the volume of the TV set.]

>>>

BOSS: As you all know I had no part in a certain operation on a young black gentleman. I call that incident a deplorable thing. That is the one thing about which I am in total agreement with the Northern radical Press. It was a deplorable thing. However . . . I understand the emotions that lay behind it. The passion to protect by this violent emotion something that we hold sacred: our purity of our own blood. But I had no part in, and I did not condone the operation performed on the unfortunate colored gentleman caught prowling the midnight streets of our Capitol City. . . .

<<<<

CHANCE: Christ! What lies. What a liar!

MISS LUCY: Wait! . . . Chance, you can still go. I can still help you, baby.

CHANCE [putting hands on Miss Lucy's shoulders]: Thanks, but no thank you, Miss Lucy. Tonight, God help me, somehow, I don't know how, but somehow I'll take her out of St Cloud. I'll wake her up in my arms, and I'll give her life back to her. Yes, somehow, God help me, somehow!

[stuff turns up volume of TV set.]

>>>

HECKLER [as voice on the TV]: Hey, Boss Finley! [The TV camera swings to show him at the back of the hall.] How about your daughter's operation? How about that operation your daughter had done on her at the Thomas J. Finley hospital here in St Cloud? Did she put on black in mourning for her appendix? . . .

[We hear a gasp, as if the heckler had been hit.]

Picture: Heavenly horrified. Sounds of a disturbance. Then the doors at the top of stairs up left burst open and the heckler tumbles down. . . . The picture changes to Boss Finley. He is trying to dominate the disturbance in the hall.]

BOSS: Will you repeat that question? Have that man step forward. I will answer his question. Where is he? Have that man step forward, I will answer his question. . . . Last Friday . . . Last Friday, Good Friday. I said last Friday, Good Friday . . . Quiet, may I have your attention please. . . . Last Friday, Good Friday, I seen a horrible thing on the campus of our great State University, which I built for the State. A hideous straw-stuffed effigy of myself, Tom Finley, was hung and set fire to in the main quadrangle of the college. This outrage was inspired . . . inspired by the Northern radical Press. However, that was Good Friday. Today is Easter. I say that was Good Friday. Today is Easter Sunday and I am in St Cloud.

[During this a gruesome, not-lighted, silent struggle has been going on. The heckler defended himself but finally has been overwhelmed and rather systematically beaten. . . . The tight intense follow spot beam stayed on Chance. If he had any impulse to go to the heckler's aid, he'd be discouraged by Stuff and another man who stand behind him, watching him. . . . At the height of the beating, there are bursts of great applause. . . . At a point during it, Heavenly is suddenly escorted down the stairs, sobbing, and collapses.]

CURTAIN

Act Three

[A while later that night: the hotel bedroom again. The shutters in the Moorish Corner are thrown open on the Palm Garden: scattered sounds of disturbance are still heard: something burns in the Palm Garden: an effigy, an emblem? Flickering light from it falls on the Princess. Over the interior scene, the constant serene projection of royal palms, branched among stars.]

PRINCESS [pacing with the phone]: Operator! What's happened to my driver?

[Chance enters on the gallery, sees someone approaching on other side--quickly pulls back and stands in shadows on the gallery.]

You told me you'd get me a driver. . . . Why can't you get me a driver when you said that you would? Somebody in this hotel can surely get me somebody to drive me at any price asked!--out of this infernal . . .

[She turns suddenly as Dan Hatcher knocks at the corridor door. Behind him appear Tom Junior, Bud, and Scotty, sweaty, disheveled from the riot in the Palm Garden.]

Who's that?

SCOTTY: She ain't gonna open, break it in.

PRINCESS [dropping phone]: What do you want?

HATCHER: Miss Del Lago . . .

BUD: Don't answer till she opens.

PRINCESS: Who's out there! What do you want?

SCOTTY [to shaky Hatcher]: Tell her you want her out of the goddam room.

HATCHER [with forced note of authority]: Shut up. Let me handle this . . . Miss Del Lago, your check-out time was three-thirty p.m., and it's now after midnight. . . . I'm sorry but you can't hold this room any longer.

PRINCESS [throwing open the door]: What did you say? Will you repeat what you said! [Her imperious voice, jewels, furs, and commanding presence abash them for a moment.]

HATCHER: Miss Del Lago . . .

TOM JUNIOR [recovering quickest]: This is Mr Hatcher, assistant manager here. You checked in last night with a character not wanted here, and we been informed he's stayin' in your room with you. We brought Mr Hatcher up here to remind you that the check-out time is long past and--

PRINCESS [powerfully]: My checkout time at any hotel in the world is when I want to check out. . . .

TOM JUNIOR: This ain't any hotel in the world.

PRINCESS [making no room for entrance]: Also, I don't talk to assistant managers of hotels when I have complaints to make about discourtesies to me, which I do most certainly have to make about my experiences here. I don't even talk to managers of hotels, I talk to owners of them. Directly to hotel owners about discourtesies to me. [Picks up satin sheets on bed.] These sheets are mine, they go with me. And I have never suffered such dreadful discourtesies to me at any hotel at any time or place anywhere in the world. Now I have found out the name of this hotel owner. This is a chain hotel under the ownership of a personal friend of mine whose guest I have been in foreign capitals such as . . . [Tom Junior has pushed past her into the room.] What in hell is he doing in my room?

TOM JUNIOR: Where is Chance Wayne?

PRINCESS: Is that what you've come here for? You can go away then. He hasn't been in this room since he left this morning.

TOM JUNIOR: Scotty, check the bathroom. . . . [He checks a closet, stoops to peer under the bed. Scotty goes off at right.] Like I told you before, we know you're Alexandra Del Lago travelling with a degenerate that I'm sure you don't know. That's why you can't stay in St Cloud, especially after this ruckus that we--[Scotty re-enters from the bathroom and indicates to Tom Junior that Chance is not there.]--Now if you need any help in getting out of St Cloud, I'll be--

PRINCESS [cutting in]: Yes. I want a driver. Someone to drive my car. I want to leave here. I'm desperate to leave here. I'm not able to drive. I have to be driven away!

TOM JUNIOR: Scotty, you and Hatcher wait outside while I explain something to her. . . . [They go and wait outside the door, on the left end of the gallery.] I'm gonna git you a driver, Miss Del Lago. I'll get you a state trooper, half a dozen state troopers if I can't get you no driver. Okay? Some time come back to our town 'n' see us, hear? We'll lay out a red carpet for you. Okay? G'night, Miss Del Lago.

[They disappear down the hall, which is then dimmed out. Chance now turns from where he's been waiting at the other end of the corridor and slowly, cautiously, approaches the entrance to the room. Wind sweeps the Palm Garden; it seems to dissolve the walls; the rest of the play is acted against the night sky. The shuttered doors on the veranda open and Chance



enters the room. He has gone a good deal farther across the border of reason since we last saw him. The Princess isn't aware of his entrance until he slams the shuttered doors. She turns, startled, to face him.]

PRINCESS: Chance!

CHANCE: You had some company here.

PRINCESS: Some men were here looking for you. They told me I wasn't welcome in this hotel and this town because I had come here with 'a criminal degenerate'. I asked them to get me a driver so I can go.

CHANCE: I'm your driver. I'm still your driver, Princess.

PRINCESS: You couldn't drive through the palm garden.

CHANCE: I'll be all right in a minute.

PRINCESS: It takes more than a minute. Chance, will you listen to me? Can you listen to me? I listened to you this morning, with understanding and pity, I did, I listened with pity to your story this morning. I felt something in my heart for you which I thought I couldn't feel. I remembered young men who were what you are or what you're hoping to be. I saw them all clearly, all clearly, eyes, voices, smiles, bodies clearly. But their names wouldn't come back to me. I couldn't get their names back without digging into old programs of plays that I starred in at twenty in which they said, 'Madam, the Count's waiting for you,' or--Chance? They almost made it. Oh, oh, Franz! Yes, Franz . . . what? Albertzart. Franz Albertzart, oh God, God, Franz Albertzart . . . I had to fire him. He held me too tight in the waltz scene, his anxious fingers left bruises once so violent, they, they dislocated a disc in my spine, and--

CHANCE: I'm waiting for you to shut up.

PRINCESS: I saw him in Monte Carlo not too long ago. He was with a woman of seventy, and his eyes looked older than hers. She held him, she led him by an invisible chain through Grand Hotel . . . lobbies and casinos and bars like a blind, dying lap dog; he wasn't much older than you are now. Not long after that he drove his Alfa-Romeo or Ferrari off the Grand Corniche--accidentally?--Broke his skull like an eggshell. I wonder what they found in it? Old, despaired-of ambitions, little treacheries, possibly even little attempts at blackmail that didn't quite come off, and whatever traces are left of really great charm and sweetness. Chance, Franz Albertzart is Chance Wayne. Will you please try to face it so we can go on together?

CHANCE [pulls away from her]: Are you through? Have you finished?

PRINCESS: You didn't listen, did you?

CHANCE [picking up the phone]: I didn't have to. I told you that story this morning--I'm not going to drive off nothing and crack my head like an eggshell.

PRINCESS: No, because you can't drive.

CHANCE: Operator? Long distance.

PRINCESS: You would drive into a palm tree. Franz Albertzart . . .

CHANCE: Where's your address book, your book of telephone numbers?

PRINCESS: I don't know what you think that you are up to, but it's no good. The only hope for you now is to let me lead you by that invisible loving steel chain through Carltons and Ritzes and Grand Hotels and--

CHANCE: Don't you know, I'd die first? I would rather die first . . . [into phone] Operator? This is an urgent person-to-person call from Miss Alexandra Del Lago to Miss Sally Powers in Beverly Hills, California. . . .

PRINCESS: Oh, no! . . . Chance!

CHANCE: Miss Sally Powers, the Hollywood columnist, yes, Sally Powers. Yes, well get information. I'll wait, I'll wait. . . .

PRINCESS: Her number is Cold water five-nine thousand. . . . [Her hand goes to her mouth--but too late.]

CHANCE: In Beverly Hills, California, Coldwater five-nine thousand.

[The Princess moves out on to forestage; surrounding areas dim till nothing is clear behind her but the palm garden.]

PRINCESS: Why did I give him the number? Well, why not, after all, I'd have to know sooner or later . . . I started to call several times, picked up the phone, put it down again. Well, let him do it for me. Something's happened. I'm breathing freely and deeply as if the panic was over. Maybe it's over. He's doing the dreadful thing for me, asking the answer for me. He doesn't exist for me now except as somebody making this awful call for me, asking the answer for me. The light's on me. He's almost invisible now. What does that mean? Does it mean that I still wasn't ready to be washed up, counted out?

CHANCE: All right, call Chasen's. Try to reach her at Chasen's.

PRINCESS: Well, one thing's sure. It's only this call I care for. I seem to be standing in light with everything else dimmed out. He's in the dimmed out background as if he'd never left the obscurity he was born in. I've taken the light again as a crown on my head to which I am suited by something in the cells of my blood and body from the time of my birth. It's mine, I was born to own it, as he was born to make this phone call for me to Sally Powers, dear faithful custodian of my outlived legend. [Phone rings in distance.] The legend that I've out-lived. . . . Monsters

don't die early; they hang on long. Awfully long. Their vanity's infinite, almost as infinite as their disgust with themselves. . . . [Phone rings louder: it brings the stage light back up on the hotel bedroom. She turns to Chance and the play returns to a more realistic level.] The phone's still ringing.

CHANCE: They gave me another number. . . .

PRINCESS: If she isn't there, give my name and ask them where I can reach her.

CHANCE: Princess?

PRINCESS: What?

CHANCE: I have a personal reason for making this phone call.

PRINCESS: I'm quite certain of that.

CHANCE [into phone]: I'm calling for Alexandra Del Lago. She wants to speak to Miss Sally Powers--Oh, is there any number where the Princess could reach her?

PRINCESS: It will be a good sign if they give you a number.

CHANCE: Oh?--Good, I'll call that number . . . Operator? Try another number for Miss Sally Powers. It's Canyon seven-five thousand. . . . Say it's urgent, it's Princess Kosmonopolis. . . .

PRINCESS: Alexandra Del Lago.

CHANCE: Alexandra Del Lago is calling Miss Powers.

PRINCESS [to herself]: Oxygen, please, a little. . . .

CHANCE: Is that you, Miss Powers? This is Chance Wayne talking. . . . I'm calling for the Princess Kosmonopolis, she wants to speak to you. She'll come to the phone in a minute.

PRINCESS: I can't. . . . Say I've . . .

CHANCE [stretching phone cord]: This is as far as I can stretch the cord, Princess, you've got to meet it halfway.

[Princess hesitates; then advances to the extended phone.]

PRINCESS [in a low, strident whisper]: Sally? Sally? Is it really you, Sally? Yes, it's me, Alexandra. It's what's left of me, Sally. Oh, yes, I was there, but I only stayed a few minutes. Soon as they started laughing in the wrong places, I fled up the aisle and into the street screaming 'Taxi'--and never stopped running till now. No, I've talked to nobody, heard nothing, read nothing . . . just wanted--dark . . . What? You're just being kind.

CHANCE [as if to himself]: Tell her that you've discovered a pair of new stars. Two of them.

PRINCESS: One moment, Sally, I'm--breathless!

CHANCE [gripping her arm]: And lay it on thick. Tell her to break it tomorrow in her column, in all of her columns, and in her radio talks . . . that you've discovered a pair of young people who are the stars of tomorrow!

PRINCESS [to Chance]: Go into the bathroom. Stick your head under cold water. . . . Sally . . . Do you really think so? You're not just being nice, Sally, because of old times--Grown, did you say? My talent? In what way, Sally? More depth? More what, did you say? More power!--well, Sally, God bless you, dear Sally.

CHANCE: Cut the chatter. Talk about me and HEAVENLY!

PRINCESS: No, of course I didn't read the reviews. I told you I flew, I flew. I flew as fast and fast as I could. Oh. Oh? Oh . . . How very sweet of you, Sally. I don't even care if you're not altogether sincere in that statement, Sally. I think you know what the past fifteen years have been like, because I do have the--'out-crying heart of an--artist'. Excuse me, Sally, I'm crying, and I don't have any Kleenex. Excuse me, Sally, I'm crying. . . .

CHANCE [hissing behind her]: Hey. Talk about me! [She kicks Chance's leg.]

PRINCESS: What's that, Sally? Do you really believe so? Who? For what part? Oh, my God! . . . Oxygen, oxygen, quick!

CHANCE [seizing her by the hair and hissing]: Me! Me!--You bitch!

PRINCESS: Sally? I'm too overwhelmed. Can I call you back later? Sally, I'll call back later. . . . [She drops phone in a daze of rapture.] My picture has broken box-office records. In New York and L. A.!

CHANCE: Call her back, get her on the phone.

PRINCESS: Broken box-office records. The greatest comeback in the history of the industry, that's what she calls it.

CHANCE: You didn't mention me to her.

PRINCESS [to herself]: I can't appear, not yet. I'll need a week in a clinic, then a week or ten days at the Morning Star Ranch at Vegas. I'd better get Ackermann down there for a series of shots before I go on to the Coast. . . .

CHANCE [at phone]: Come back here, call her again.

PRINCESS: I'll leave the car in New Orleans and go on by plane to, to, to--Tucson. I'd better get Strauss working on publicity for me. I'd better be sure my tracks are covered up well these last few weeks in--hell!--

CHANCE: Here. Here, get her back on this phone.

PRINCESS: Do what?

CHANCE: Talk about me and talk about Heavenly to her.

PRINCESS: Talk about a beach-boy I picked up for pleasure, distraction from panic? Now? When the nightmare is over? Involve my name, which is Alexandra Del Lago, with the record of a--You've just been using me. Using me. When I needed you downstairs you shouted, 'Get her a wheel chair!' Well, I didn't need a wheel chair, I came up alone, as always. I climbed back alone up the beanstalk to the ogre's country where I live, now, alone. Chance, you've gone past something you couldn't afford to go past; your time, your youth, you've passed it. It's all you had, and you've had it.

CHANCE: Who in hell's talking! Look. [He turns her forcibly to the mirror.] Look in that mirror. What do you see in that mirror?

PRINCESS: I see--Alexandra Del Lago, artist and star! Now it's your turn, you look and what do you see?

CHANCE: I see--Chance Wayne. . . .

PRINCESS: The face of a Franz Albertzart, a face that tomorrow's sun will touch without mercy. Of course, you were crowned with laurel in the beginning, your gold hair was wreathed with laurel, but the gold is thinning and the laurel has withered. Face it--pitiful monster.

[She touches the crown of his head,]

. . . Of course, I know I'm one too. But one with a difference. Do you know what that difference is? No, you don't know. I'll tell you. We are two monsters, but with this difference between us. Out of the passion and torment of my existence I have created a thing that I can unveil, a sculpture, almost heroic, that I can unveil, which is true. But you? You've come back to the town you were born in, to a girl that won't see you because you put such rot in her body she had to be gutted and hung on a butcher's hook, like a chicken dressed for Sunday. . . .

[He wheels about to strike at her but his raised fist changes its course and strikes down at his own belly and he bends double with a sick cry. Palm Garden wind: whisper of the 'Lament'.]

Yes, and her brother who was one of my callers, threatens the same thing for you: castration, if you stay here.

CHANCE: That can't be done to me twice. You did that to me this morning, here on this bed, where I had the honor, where I had the great honor . . .

[Windy sound rises: they move away from each other, he to the bed, she close to her portable dressing table.]

PRINCESS: Age does the same thing to a woman. . . . [Scrapes pearls and pillboxes off table top into handbag.] Well . . .

[All at once her power is exhausted, her fury gone. Something uncertain appears in her face and voice betraying the fact which she probably suddenly knows, that her future course is not a progression of triumphs. She still maintains a grand air as she snatches up her platinum mink stole and tosses it about her: it slides immediately off her shoulders; she doesn't seem to notice. He picks the stole up for her, puts it about her shoulders. She grunts disdainfully, her back to him; then resolution falters; she turns to face him with great, dark eyes that are fearful, lonely, and tender.]

PRINCESS: I am going, now, on my way. [He nods slightly, loosening the Windsor-knot of his knitted black silk tie. Her eyes stay on him.] Well, are you leaving or staying?

CHANCE: Staying.

PRINCESS: You can't stay here. I'll take you to the next town.

CHANCE: Thanks but no thank you, Princess.

PRINCESS [seizing his arm]: Come on, you've got to leave with me. My name is connected with you, we checked in here together. Whatever happens to you, my name will be dragged in with it.

CHANCE: Whatever happens to me's already happened.

PRINCESS: What are you trying to prove?

CHANCE: Something's got to mean something, don't it, Princess? I mean like your life means nothing, except that you never could make it, always almost, never quite? Well, something's still got to mean something.

PRINCESS: I'll send a boy up for my luggage. You'd better come down with my luggage.

CHANCE: I'm not part of your luggage,

PRINCESS: What else can you be?

CHANCE: Nothing . . . but not part of your luggage.

[note: in this area it is very important that Chance's attitude should be self-recognition but not self-pity--a sort of deathbed dignity and honesty apparent in it. In both Chance and the Princess, we should return to the huddling-together of the lost, but not with sentiment, which is false, but with whatever is truthful in the moments when people share doom, face firing squads together. Because the Princess is really equally doomed. She can't turn back the clock any more than can Chance, and the clock is equally relentless to them both. For the Princess: a little, very temporary, return to, recapture of, the spurious glory. The report from Sally Powers may be and probably is a factually accurate report: but to indicate she is going on to further triumph would be to falsify her future. The Princess makes this instinctive admission to herself when she sits down by Chance on the bed, facing the audience. Both are faced with castration, and in her heart she knows it. They sit side by side on the bed like two passengers on a train sharing a bench.]

PRINCESS: Chance, we've got to go on.

CHANCE: Go on to where? I couldn't go past my youth, but I've gone past it.

[The 'Lament' fades in, continues through the scene to the last curtain.]

PRINCESS: You're still young, Chance.

CHANCE: Princess, the age of some people can only be calculated by the level of--level of--rot in them. And by that measure I'm ancient.

PRINCESS: What am I?--I know, I'm dead, as old Egypt. . . . Isn't it funny? We're still sitting here together, side by side in this room, like we were occupying the same bench on a train--going on together. . . . Look. That little donkey's marching around and around to draw water out of a well. . . . [She points off at something as if outside a train window.] Look, a shepherd boy's leading a flock.--What an old country, timeless.--Look--[The sound of a clock ticking is heard, louder and louder.]

CHANCE: No, listen. I didn't know there was a clock in this room.

PRINCESS: I guess there's a clock in every room people live in. . . .

CHANCE: It goes tick-tick, it's quieter than your heart-beat, but it's slow dynamite, a gradual explosion, blasting the world we lived in to burnt-out pieces. . . . Time--who could beat it, who could defeat it ever? Maybe some saints and heroes, but not Chance Wayne. I lived on something, that--time?

PRINCESS: Yes, time.

CHANCE: . . . Gnaws away, like a rat gnaws off its own foot caught in a trap, and then, with its foot gnawed off and the rat set free, couldn't run, couldn't go, bled and died. . . .

[The clock ticking fades away.]

TOM JUNIOR [offstage left]: Miss Del Lago . . .

PRINCESS: I think they're calling our--station. . . .

TOM JUNIOR [still offstage]: Miss Del Lago, I have got a driver for you.

[A trooper enters and waits on gallery.

With a sort of tired grace, she rises from the bed, one hand lingering on her seat-companion's shoulder as she moves a little unsteadily to the door. When she opens it, she is confronted by Tom Junior.]

PRINCESS: Come on, Chance, we're going to change trains at this station. . . . So, come on, we've got to go on. . . . Chance, please . . .

[Chance shakes his head and the Princess gives up. She weaves out of sight with the trooper down the corridor. Tom Junior enters from steps, pauses, and then gives a low whistle to Scotty, Bud, and third man who enter and stand waiting, Tom Junior comes down bedroom steps and stands on bottom step.]

CHANCE [rising and advancing to the forestage]: I don't ask for your pity, but just for your understanding--not even that--no. Just for your recognition of me in you, and the enemy, time, in us all.

CURTAIN

FOREWORD [now Afterword]

(Written prior to the Broadway opening of *Sweet Bird of Youth* and published in the New York Times on Sunday, 8 March 1959.)

When I came to my writing desk on a recent morning, I found lying on my desk top an unmailed letter that I had written. I began reading it and found this sentence: 'We are all civilized people, which means that we are all savages at heart but observing a few amenities of civilized behavior.' Then I went on to say: 'I am afraid that I observe fewer of these amenities than you do. Reason? My back is to the wall and has been to the wall for so long that the pressure of my back on the wall has started to crumble the plaster that covers the bricks and mortar.'



Isn't it odd that I said the wall was giving way, not my back? I think so. Pursuing this course of free association, I suddenly remembered a dinner date I once had with a distinguished colleague. During the course of this dinner, rather close to the end of it, he broke a long, mournful silence by lifting to me his sympathetic gaze and saying to me, sweetly, 'Tennessee, don't you feel that you are blocked as a writer?'

I didn't stop to think of an answer; it came immediately off my tongue without any pause for planning. I said, 'Oh, yes, I've always been blocked as a writer but my desire to write has been so strong that it has always broken down the block and gone past it.'

Nothing untrue comes off the tongue that quickly. It is planned speeches that contain lies or dissimulations, not what you blurt out so spontaneously in one instant.

It was literally true. At the age of fourteen I discovered writing as an escape from a world of reality in which I felt acutely uncomfortable. It immediately became my place of retreat, my cave, my refuge. From what? From being called a sissy by the neighborhood kids, and Miss Nancy by my father, because I would rather read books in my grandfather's large and classical library than play marbles and baseball and other normal kid games, a result of a severe childhood illness and of excessive attachment to the female members of my family, who had coaxed me back into life.

I think no more than a week after I started writing I ran into the first block. It's hard to describe it in a way that will be understandable to anyone who is not a neurotic. I will try. All my life I have been haunted by the obsession that to desire a thing or to love a thing intensely is to place yourself in a vulnerable position, to be a possible, if not a probable, loser of what you most want. Let's leave it like that. That block has always been there and always will be, and my chance of getting, or achieving, anything that I long for will always be gravely reduced by the interminable existence of that block.

I described it once in a poem called 'The Marvelous Children'.

'He, the demon, set up barricades of gold and purple tinfoil, labeled Fear (and other august titles), which they, the children, would leap lightly over, always tossing backwards their wild laughter.'

But having, always, to contend with this adversary of fear, which was sometimes terror, gave me a certain tendency towards an atmosphere of hysteria and violence in my writing, an atmosphere that has existed in it since the beginning.

In my first published work, for which I received the big sum of thirty-five dollars, a story published in the July or August issue of *Weird Tales* in the year 1928, I drew upon a paragraph in the ancient histories of Herodotus to create a story of how the Egyptian queen, Nitocris, invited all of her enemies to a lavish banquet in a subterranean hall on the shores of the Nile, and how, at the height of this banquet, she excused herself from the table and opened sluice gates admitting the waters of the Nile into the locked banquet hall, drowning her unloved guests like so many rats.

I was sixteen when I wrote this story, but already a confirmed writer, having entered upon this vocation at the age of fourteen, and, if you're well acquainted with my writings since then, I don't have to tell you that it set the keynote for most of the work that has followed.

My first four plays, two of them performed in St Louis, were correspondingly violent or more so. My first play professionally produced and aimed at Broadway was *Battle of Angels* and it was about as violent as you can get on the stage.

During the nineteen years since then I have only produced five plays that are not violent: *The Glass Menagerie*, *You Touched Me*, *Summer and Smoke*, *The Rose Tattoo*, and,

recently in Florida, a serious comedy called *Period of Adjustment*, which is still being worked on.

What surprises me is the degree to which both critics and audience have accepted this barrage of violence. I think I was surprised, most of all, by the acceptance and praise of *Suddenly Last Summer*. When it was done off Broadway, I thought I would be critically tarred and feathered and ridden on a fence rail out of the New York theatre, with no future haven except in translation for theatres abroad, who might mistakenly construe my work as a castigation of American morals, not understanding that I write about violence in American life only because I am not so well acquainted with the society of other countries.

Last year I thought it might help me as a writer to undertake psychoanalysis and so I did. The analyst, being acquainted with my work and recognizing the psychic wounds expressed in it, asked me, soon after we started, 'Why are you so full of hate, anger, and envy?'

Hate was the word I contested. After much discussion and argument, we decided that 'hate' was just a provisional term and that we would only use it till we had discovered the more precise term. But unfortunately I got restless and started hopping back and forth between the analyst's couch and some Caribbean beaches. I think before we called it quits I had persuaded the doctor that hate was not the right word, that there was some other thing, some other word for it, which we had not yet uncovered, and we left it like that.

Anger, oh yes! And envy, yes! But not hate. I think that hate is a thing, a feeling, that can only exist where there is no understanding. Significantly, good physicians never have it. They never hate their patients, no matter how hateful their patients may seem to be, with their relentless, maniacal concentration on their own tortured egos.

Since I am a member of the human race, when I attack its behavior towards fellow members I am obviously including myself in the attack, unless I regard myself as not human but superior to humanity. I don't. In fact, I can't expose a human weakness on the stage unless I know it through having it myself. I have exposed a good many human weaknesses and brutalities and consequently I have them.

I don't even think that I am more conscious of mine than any of you are of yours. Guilt is universal. I mean a strong sense of guilt. If there exists any area in which a man can rise above his moral condition, imposed upon him at birth, and long before birth, by the nature of his breed, then I think it is only a willingness to know it, to face its existence in him, and I think that, at least below the conscious level, we all face it. Hence guilty feelings, and hence defiant aggressions, and hence the deep dark of despair that haunts our dreams, our creative work, and makes us distrust each other.

Enough of these philosophical abstractions, for now. To get back to writing for the theatre, if there is any truth in the Aristotelian idea that violence is purged by its poetic representation on a stage, then it may be that my cycle of violent plays have had a moral justification after all. I know that I have felt it, I have always felt a release from the sense of meaninglessness and death when a work of tragic intention has seemed to me to have achieved that intention, even if only approximately, nearly.

I would say that there is something much bigger in life and death than we have become aware of (or adequately recorded) in our living and dying. And, further, to compound this shameless romanticism, I would say that our serious theatre is a search for that something that is not yet successful but is still going on.

## THE CHARACTERS

Sweet Bird of Youth was presented at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York on 10 March 1959 by Cheryl Crawford. It was directed by Elia Kazan; the stage settings and lighting were by Jo Mielziner, the costumes by Anna Hill Johnstone, and the music by Paul Bowles; production stage manager, David Pardoli. The cast was as follows:

CHANCE WAYNE	Paul Newman	
THE PRINCESS KOSMONOPOLIS		Geraldine Page
FLY	Milton J. Williams	
MAID	Patricia Ripley	
GEORGE SCUDDER		Logan Ramsey
HATCHER	John Napier	
BOSS FINLEY	Sidney Blackmer	
TOM JUNIOR	Rip Torn	
AUNT NONNIE	Martine Bartlett	
HEAVENLY FINLEY		Diana Hyland
CHARLES	Earl Sydnor	
STUFF	Bruce Dern	
MISS LUCY	Madeleine Sherwood	
THE HECKLER	Charles Tyner	
VIOLET	Monica May	
EDNA	Hilda Browner	
SCOTTY	Charles McDaniel	
BUD	Jim Jeter	
PAGE	Glenn Stensel	
MEN IN BAR		Duke Farley
	Ron Harper	
	Kenneth Blake	