Suddenly Last Summer, with Something Unspoken, were presented together under the collective title of Garden District at the York Theatre on First Avenue in New York on January 7, 1958 by John C. Wilson and Warner Le Roy. It was directed by Herbert Machiz; the stage set was designed by Robert Soule and the costumes by Stanley Simmons. Lighting was by Lee Watson and the incidental music was by Ned Rorem. Something Unspoken was published in the latest edition of 27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MRS. VENABLE            HORTENSE ALDEN
DR. CUKROWICZ           ROBERT LANSING
MISS FOXHILL            DONNA CAMERON
MRS. HOLLY               ELEANOR PHELPS
GEORGE HOLLY             ALAN MIKON
CATHERINE HOLLY          ANNE MEACHAM
SISTER FELICITY          NANON-KIAM
Scene One

The set may be as unrealistic as the decor of a dramatic ballet. It represents part of a mansion of Victorian Gothic style in the Garden District of New Orleans on a late afternoon, between late summer and early fall. The interior is blended with a fantastic garden which is more like a tropical jungle, or forest, in the prehistoric age of giant fern-forests when living creatures had flippers turning to limbs and scales to skin. The colors of this jungle-garden are violent, especially since it is steaming with heat after rain. There are massive tree-flowers that suggest organs of a body, torn out, still blistening with undried blood; there are harsh cries and sibilant bissings and thrashing sounds in the garden as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents and birds, all of savage nature. . . .

The jungle tumult continues a few moments after the curtain rises; then subsides into relative quiet, which is occasionally broken by a new outburst.

A lady enters with the assistance of a silver-knobbed cane. She has light orange or pink hair and wears a lavender lace dress, and over her withered bosom is pinned a starfish of diamonds.

She is followed by a young blond Doctor, all in
white, glacially brilliant, very, very good-looking, and the old lady’s manner and eloquence indicate her undeliberate response to his icy charm.

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes, this was Sebastian’s garden. The Latin names of the plants were printed on tags attached to them but the print’s fading out. Those ones there—[She draws a deep breath]—are the oldest plants on earth, survivors from the age of the giant fern-forests. Of course in this semitropical climate—[She takes another deep breath]—some of the rarest plants, such as the Venus flytrap—you know what this is, Doctor? The Venus flytrap?

DOCTOR:
An insectivorous plant?

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes, it feeds on insects. It has to be kept under glass from early fall to late spring and when it went under glass, my son, Sebastian, had to provide it with fruit flies flown in at great expense from a Florida laboratory that used fruit flies for experiments in genetics. Well, I can’t do that, Doctor. [She takes a deep breath.] I can’t, I just can’t do it! It’s not the expense but the—

DOCTOR:
Effort.

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes. So goodbye, Venus flytrap!—like so much else... Whew!... [She draws breath.]—I don’t know why, but—! I already feel I can lean on your shoulder, Doctor—Cu?—Cu?

SCENE ONE

DOCTOR:
Cu-kro-wicz. It’s a Polish word that mean sugar, so let’s make it simple and call me Doctor Sugar. [He returns her smile.]

MRS. VENABLE:
Well, now, Doctor Sugar, you’ve seen Sebastian’s garden. [They are advancing slowly to the patio area.]

DOCTOR:
It’s like a well-groomed jungle. ...

MRS. VENABLE:
That’s how he meant it to be, nothing was accidental, everything was planned and designed in Sebastian’s life and his—[She dabs her forehead with her handkerchief which she had taken from her reticule]—work!

DOCTOR:
What was your son’s work, Mrs. Venable?—besides this garden?

MRS. VENABLE:
As many times as I’ve had to answer that question! Do you know it still shocks me a little?—to realize that Sebastian Venable, the poet it still unknown outside of a small coterie of friends, including his mother.

DOCTOR:
Oh.

MRS. VENABLE:
You see, strictly speaking, his life was his occupation.

DOCTOR:
I see,
SCENE ONE

MRS. VENABLE:
No, you don't see, yet, but before I’m through, you will.—Sebastian was a poet! That's what I meant when I said his life was his work because the work of a poet is the life of a poet and—vice versa, the life of a poet is the work of a poet. I mean you can’t separate them. I mean—well, for instance, a salesman's work is one thing and his life is another—or can be. The same thing's true of—doctor, lawyer, merchant, thief!—But a poet's life is his work and his work is his life in a special sense because—oh, I've already talked myself breathless and dizzy.

[The Doctor offers his arm.]

Thank you.

DOCTOR:
Mrs. Venable, did your doctor okay this thing?

MRS. VENABLE [breathless]:
What thing?

DOCTOR:
Your meeting this girl that you think is responsible for your son's death?

MRS. VENABLE:
I've waited months to face her because I couldn't get to St. Mary's to face her—I've had her brought here to my house. I won't collapse! She'll collapse! I mean her lies will collapse—not my truth—not the truth. . . .

Forward march, Doctor Sugar!

[He conducts her slowly to the patio.]

Ah, we've made it, ha ha! I didn't know that I was so weak on my pins! Sit down, Doctor. I'm not afraid of using every last ounce and inch of my little, left-

SCENE ONE

over strength in doing just what I'm doing. I'm devoting all that's left of my life, Doctor, to the defense of a dead poet's reputation. Sebastian had no public name as a poet, he didn't want one, he refused to have one. He dreaded, abhorred!—false values that come from being publicly known, from fame, from personal—exploitation. . . . Oh, he'd say to me: "Violet? Mother?—You're going to outlive me!!"

DOCTOR:
What made him think that?

MRS. VENABLE.
Poets are always clairvoyant!—And he had rheumatic fever when he was fifteen and it affected a heart-valve and he wouldn't stay off horses and out of water and so forth. . . . "Violet? Mother? You're going to live longer than me, and then, when I'm gone, it will be yours, in your hands, to do whatever you please with!"—Meaning, of course, his future recognition!—That he did want, he wanted it after his death when it couldn't disturb him; then he did want to offer his work to the world. All right. Have I made my point, Doctor? Well, here, is my son's work, Doctor, here's his life going on!

[She lifts a thin gilt-edged volume from the patio table as if elevating the Host before the altar. Its gold leaf and lettering catch the afternoon sun. It says Poem of Summer. Her face suddenly has a different look, the look of a visionary, an exalted religieuse. At the same instant a bird sings clearly and purely in the garden and the old lady seems to be almost young for a moment.]

DOCTOR [reading the title]:
Poem of Summer?
MRS. VENABLE:
*Poem of Summer,* and the date of the summer, there are twenty-five of them, he wrote one poem a year which he printed himself on an eighteenth-century hand-press at his—atelier in the—French—Quarter—so no one but he could see it. . . .

[She seems dizzy for a moment.]

DOCTOR:
He wrote one poem a year?

MRS. VENABLE:
One for each summer that we traveled together. The other nine months of the year were really only a preparation.

DOCTOR:
Nine months?

MRS. VENABLE:
The length of a pregnancy, yes. . . .

DOCTOR:
The poem was hard to deliver?

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes, even with me. *Without me, impossible,* Doctor!—he wrote no poem last summer.

DOCTOR:
He died last summer?

MRS. VENABLE:
Without me he died last summer, that was his last summer’s poem.

[She staggers; he assists her toward a chair. She catches her breath with difficulty.]

SCENE ONE

One long-ago summer—now, why am I thinking of this?—my son, Sebastian, said, “Mother?—Listen to this!”—He read me Herman Melville’s description of the Encantadas, the Galapagos Islands. Quote—take five and twenty heaps of cinders dumped here and there in an outside city lot. Imagine some of them magnified into mountains, and the vacant lot, the sea. And you’ll have a fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas, the Enchanted Isles—extinct volcanos, looking much as the world at large might look—after a last conflagration—end quote. He read me that description and said that we had to go there. And so we did go there that summer on a chartered boat, a four-masted schooner, as close as possible to the sort of a boat that Melville must have sailed on. . . . We saw the Encantadas, but on the Encantadas we saw something Melville *hadn’t* written about. We saw the great sea-turtles crawl up out of the sea for their annual egg-laying. . . . Once a year the female of the sea-turtle crawls up out of the equatorial sea onto the blazing sand-beach of a volcanic island to dig a pit in the sand and deposit her eggs there. It’s a long and dreadful thing, the depositing of the eggs in the sand-pits, and when it’s finished the exhausted female turtle crawls back to the sea half-dead. She never sees her offspring, but we did. Sebastian knew exactly when the sea-turtle eggs would be hatched out and we returned in time for it. . . .

DOCTOR:
You went back to the—?

MRS. VENABLE:
Terrible Encantadas, those heaps of extinct volcanos, in time to witness the hatching of the sea-turtles and their desperate flight to the sea!
SCENE ONE

[There is a sound of harsh bird-cries in the air. She looks up.]

—The narrow beach, the color of caviar, was all in motion! But the sky was in motion, too. . . .

DOCTOR:
The sky was in motion, too?

MRS. VENABLE:
—Full of flesh-eating birds and the noise of the birds, the horrible savage cries of the—

DOCTOR:
Carnivorous birds?

MRS. VENABLE:
Over the narrow black beach of the Encantadas as the just hatched sea-turtles scrambled out of the sandpits and started their race to the sea. . . .

DOCTOR:
Race to the sea?

MRS. VENABLE:
To escape the flesh-eating birds that made the sky almost as black as the beach!

[She gazes up again: we hear the wild, ravenous, harsh cries of the birds. The sound comes in rhythmic waves like a savage chant.]

And the sand all alive, all alive, as the hatched sea-turtles made their dash for the sea, while the birds hovered and swooped to attack and hovered and—swooped to attack! They were diving down on the hatched sea-turtles, turning them over to expose their soft undersides, tearing the undersides open and rend-

SCENE ONE

ing and eating their flesh. Sebastian guessed that possibly only a hundredth of one per cent of their number would escape to the sea. . . .

DOCTOR:
What was it about this that fascinated your son?

MRS. VENABLE:
My son was looking for—[She stops short with a slight gasp.]—Let’s just say he was interested in sea-turtles!

DOCTOR:
That isn’t what you started to say.

MRS. VENABLE:
I stopped myself just in time.

DOCTOR:
Say what you started to say.

MRS. VENABLE:
I started to say that my son was looking for God and I stopped myself because I thought you’d think ‘Oh, a pretentious young crackpot!’—which Sebastian was not!

DOCTOR:
Mrs. Venable, doctors look for God, too.

MRS. VENABLE:
Oh?

DOCTOR:
I think they have to look harder for him than priests since they don’t have the help of such well-known guidebooks and well-organized expeditions as the priests have with their scriptures and—churches. . . .
SCENE ONE

MRS. VENABLE:
You mean they go on a solitary safari like a poet?

DOCTOR:
Yes. Some do. I do.

MRS. VENABLE:
I believe, I believe you! [She laughs, startled.]

DOCTOR:
Let me tell you something—the first operation I performed at Lion's View.—You can imagine how anxious and nervous I was about the outcome.

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes.

DOCTOR:
The patient was a young girl regarded as hopeless and put in the Drum—

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes.

DOCTOR:
The name for the violent ward at Lion's View because it looks like the inside of a drum with very bright lights burning all day and all night.—So the attendants can see any change of expression or movement among the inmates in time to grab them if they're about to attack. After the operation I stayed with the girl, as if I'd delivered a child that might stop breathing.—When they finally wheeled her out of surgery, I still stayed with her. I walked along by the rolling table holding onto her hand—with my heart in my throat.... [We hear faint music.]

SCENE ONE

—It was a nice afternoon, as fair as this one. And the moment we wheeled her outside, she whispered something, she whispered: "Oh, how blue the sky is!"—And I felt proud, I felt proud and relieved, because up till then her speech, everything that she’d babbled, was a torrent of obscenities!

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes, well, now, I can tell you without any hesitation that my son was looking for God, I mean for a clear image of him. He spent that whole blazing equatorial day in the crow’s-nest of the schooner watching this thing on the beach till it was too dark to see it, and when he came down the rigging he said "Well, now I've seen Him!" and he meant God.—And for several weeks after that he had a fever, he was delirious with it.—

[The Encantadas music then fades in again, briefly, at a lower level, a whisper.]

DOCTOR:
I can see how he might be, I think he would be disturbed if he thought he'd seen God's image, an equation of God, in that spectacle you watched in the Encantadas: creatures of the air hovering over and swooping down to devour creatures of the sea that had had the bad luck to be hatched on land and weren't able to scramble back into the sea fast enough to escape that massacre you witnessed, yes, I can see how such a spectacle could be equated with a good deal of—experience, existence!—but not with God! Can you?

MRS. VENABLE:
Dr. Sugar, I'm a reasonably loyal member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, but I understood what he meant.
DOCTOR:
Did he mean we must rise above God?

MRS. VENABLE:
He meant that God shows a savage face to people and shouts some fierce things at them, it's all we see or hear of Him. Isn't it all we ever really see and hear of Him, now?—Nobody seems to know why....

[Music fades out again.]

Shall I go on from there?

DOCTOR:
Yes, do.

MRS. VENABLE:
Well, next?—India—China—

[Miss Foxhill appears with the medicine. Mrs. Venable sees her.]

MISS FOXHILL:
Mrs. Venable.

MRS. VENABLE:
Oh, God—elixir—of—. [She takes the glass.] Isn't it kind of the drugstore to keep me alive. Where was I, Doctor?

DOCTOR:
In the Himalayas.

MRS. VENABLE:
Oh yes, that long-ago summer.... In the Himalayas he almost entered a Buddhist monastery, had gone so far as to shave his head and eat just rice out of a wood bowl on a grass mat. He'd promised those sly Buddhist monks that he would give up the world and himself and all his worldly possessions to their mendicant order.—Well, I cabled his father, "For God's sake notify bank to freeze Sebastian's accounts!"—I got back this cable from my late husband's lawyer: "Mr. Venable critically ill Stop Wants you Stop Needs you Stop Immediate return advised most strongly. Stop. Cable time of arrival...."

DOCTOR:
Did you go back to your husband?

MRS. VENABLE:
I made the hardest decision of my life I stayed with my son. I got him through that crisis too. In less than a month he got up off the filthy grass mat and threw the rice bowl away—and booked us into Shepeed's Hotel in Cairo and the Ritz in Paris. And from then on, oh, we—still lived in a—world of light and shadow....

[She turns vaguely with empty glass. He rises and takes it from her.]

But the shadow was almost as luminous as the light.

DOCTOR:
Don't you want to sit down now?

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes, indeed I do, before I fall down.

[He assists her into wheelchair.]

—Are your hind-legs still on you?

DOCTOR [still concerned over her agitation]:
—My what? Oh—hind legs.—Yes....

MRS. VENABLE:
Well, then you're not a donkey, you're certainly not
a donkey because I've been talking the hind-legs off a
donkey—several donkeys. . . . But I had to make it
clear to you that the world lost a great deal too when
I lost my son last summer. . . . You would have liked
my son, he would have been charmed by you. My
son, Sebastian, was not a family snob or a money
snob but he was a snob, all right. He was a snob
about personal charm in people, he insisted upon good
looks in people around him, and, oh, he had a perfect
little court of young and beautiful people around him
always, wherever he was, here in New Orleans or
New York or on the Riviera or in Paris and Venice,
he always had a little entourage of the beautiful and
the talented and the young!

DOCTOR:
Your son was young, Mrs. Venable?

MRS. VENABLE:
Both of us were young, and stayed young, Doctor.

DOCTOR:
Could I see a photograph of your son, Mrs. Venable?

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes, indeed you could, Doctor. I'm glad that you asked
to see one. I'm going to show you not one photograph
but two. Here. Here is my son, Sebastian, in a Renais-
sance pageboy's costume at a masked ball in Cannes.
Here is my son, Sebastian, in the same costume at a
masked ball in Venice. These two pictures were taken
twenty years apart. Now which is the older one, Doctor?

DOCTOR:
This photograph looks older.

SCENE ONE

MRS. VENABLE:
The photograph looks older but not the subject. It
takes character to refuse to grow old, Doctor—succes-
sfully to refuse to. It calls for discipline, abstention.
One cocktail before dinner, not two, four, six—a
single lean chop and lime juice on a salad in restaurants
famed for rich dishes.

[Foxhill comes from the house.]

MISS FOXHILL:
Mrs. Venable, Miss Holly's mother and brother are—
[Simultaneously Mrs. Holly and George appear in
the window.]

GEORGE:
Hi, Aunt Vi!

MRS. HOLLY:
Violet dear, we're here.

MISS FOXHILL:
They're here.

MRS. VENABLE:
Wait upstairs in my upstairs living room for me.

[To Miss Foxhill:]

Get them upstairs. I don't want them at that window
during this talk.

[To the Doctor:]

Let's get away from the window.

[He wheels her to stage center.]

DOCTOR:
Mrs. Venable? Did your son have a—well—what kind
of a personal, well, private life did—
SCENE ONE

MRS. VENABLE:
That's a question I wanted you to ask me.

MISS FOXHILL:
Why?

MRS. VENABLE:
I haven't heard the girl's story except indirectly in a watered-down version, being too ill to go to hear it directly, but I've gathered enough to know that it's a hideous attack on my son's moral character which, being dead, he can't defend himself from. I have to be the defender. Now. Sit down. Listen to me . . .

[The Doctor sits.]

... before you hear whatever you're going to hear from the girl when she gets here. My son, Sebastian, was chaste. Not c-h-a-s-e-d! Oh, he was chased in that way of spelling it, too, we had to be very fleet-footed I can tell you, with his looks and his charm, to keep ahead of pursuers, every kind of pursuer!—I mean he was c-h-a-s-t-e!—Chaste. . . .

DOCTOR:
I understood what you meant, Mrs. Venable.

MRS. VENABLE:
And you believe me, don't you?

DOCTOR:
Yes, but—

MRS. VENABLE:
But what?

DOCTOR:
Chastity at—what age was your son last summer?

MRS. VENABLE:
Forty, maybe. We really didn't count birthdays. . . .

DOCTOR:
He lived a celibate life?

MRS. VENABLE:
As strictly as if he'd vowed to! This sounds like vanity, Doctor, but really I was actually the only one in his life that satisfied the demands he made of people. Time after time my son would let people go, dismiss them!—because their, their, their!—attitude toward him was—

DOCTOR:
Not pure as—

MRS. VENABLE:
My son, Sebastian, demanded! We were a famous couple. People didn't speak of Sebastian and his mother or Mrs. Venable and her son, they said "Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian are staying at the Lido, they're at the Ritz in Madrid. Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian have taken a house at Biarritz for the season," and every appearance, every time we appeared, attention was centered on us!—everyone else! Eclipsed! Vanity? Ohhhh, no, Doctor, you can't call it that—

DOCTOR:
I didn't call it that.

MRS. VENABLE:
—It wasn't folie de grandeur, it was grandeur.

DOCTOR:
I see.
SCENE ONE

MRS. VENABLE:
An attitude toward life that's hardly been known in
the world since the great Renaissance princes were
crowded out of their palaces and gardens by success-
ful shopkeepers!

DOCTOR:
I see.

MRS. VENABLE:
Most people's lives—what are they but trails of debris,
each day more debris, more debris, long, long trails
of debris with nothing to clean it all up but, finally,
death...

[We hear lyric music.]

My son, Sebastian, and I constructed our days, each
day, we would—carve out each day of our lives like
a piece of sculpture.—Yes, we left behind us a trail
of days like a gallery of sculpture! But, last summer—
[Pause: the music continues.]

I can't forgive him for it, not even now that he's paid
for it with his life!—he let in this—vandal! This—

DOCTOR:
The girl that—?

MRS. VENABLE:
That you're going to meet here this afternoon! Yes.
He admitted this vandal and with her tongue for a
hatchet she's gone about smashing our legend, the
memory of—

DOCTOR:
Mrs. Venable, what do you think is her reason?

MRS. VENABLE:
Lunatics don't have reason!

DOCTOR:
I mean what do you think is her—motive?

MRS. VENABLE:
What a question!—We put the bread in her mouth
and the clothes on her back. People that like you for
that or even forgive you for it are, are—hen's teeth,
Doctor. The role of the benefactor is worse than
thankless, it's the role of a victim, Doctor, a sacrificial
victim, yes, they want your blood, Doctor, they
want your blood on the altar steps of their outraged,
outrageous egos!

DOCTOR:
Oh. You mean she resented the—

MRS. VENABLE:
Loathed!—They can't shut her up at St. Mary's.

DOCTOR:
I thought she'd been there for months.

MRS. VENABLE:
I mean keep her still there. She babbles! They couldn't
shut her up in Cabeza de Lobo or at the clinic in
Paris—she babbled, babbled!—smashing my son's reput-
tation.—On the Berengaria bringing her back to the
States she broke out of the stateroom and babbled,
babbled; even at the airport when she was flown down
here, she babbled a bit of her story before they could
whisk her into an ambulance to St. Mary's. This is a
reticule, Doctor. [She raises a cloth bag.] A catch-all,
carry-all bag for an elderly lady which I turned into
last summer... Will you open it for me, my hands
are stiff, and fish out some cigarettes and a cigarette holder.

[He does.]

DOCTOR:  
I don’t have matches.

MRS. VENABLE:  
I think there’s a table-lighter on the table.

DOCTOR:  
Yes, there is.  
[He lights it, it flames up high.]

My Lord, what a torch!

MRS. VENABLE [with a sudden, sweet smile]:  
“So shines a good deed in a naughty world,” Doctor—Sugar...  
[Pause. A bird sings sweetly in the garden.]

DOCTOR:  
Mrs. Venable?

MRS. VENABLE:  
Yes?

DOCTOR:  
In your letter last week you made some reference to a,  
to a—fund of some kind, an endowment fund of—

MRS. VENABLE:  
I wrote you that my lawyers and bankers and certified public accountants were setting up the Sebastian Venable Memorial Foundation to subsidize the work of young people like you that are pushing out the frontiers of art and science but have a financial prob-

DOCTOR:  
Yes. You have a financial problem, don’t you, Doctor?

DOCTOR:  
Yes, we do have that problem. My work is such a new and radical thing that people in charge of state funds are naturally a little scared of it and keep us on a small budget, so small that—. We need a separate ward for my patients, I need trained assistants, I’d like to marry a girl I can’t afford to marry!—But there’s also the problem of getting right patients, not just—criminal psychopaths that the State turns over to us for my operation!—because it’s—well—risky... I don’t want to turn you against my work at Lion’s View but I have to be honest with you. There is a good deal of risk in my operation. Whenever you enter the brain with a foreign object...

MRS. VENABLE:  
Yes.

DOCTOR:  
—Even a needle-thin knife...

MRS. VENABLE:  
Yes.

DOCTOR:  
—in a skilled surgeon’s fingers...

MRS. VENABLE:  
Yes.

DOCTOR:  
—There is a good deal of risk involved in—the operation...
SCENE ONE

MRS. VENABLE:
You said that it pacifies them, it quiets them down, it suddenly makes them peaceful.

DOCTOR:
Yes. It does that, that much we already know, but—

MRS. VENABLE:
What?

DOCTOR:
Well, it will be ten years before we can tell if the immediate benefits of the operation will be lasting or—passing or even if there'd still be—and this is what haunts me about it!—any possibility, afterwards, of reconstructing a—totally sound person, it may be that the person will always be limited afterwards, relieved of acute disturbances but—limited, Mrs Venable....

MRS. VENABLE:
Oh, but what a blessing to them, Doctor, to be just peaceful, to be just suddenly—peaceful....

[\textit{A bird sings sweetly in the garden.}]

After all that horror, after those nightmares; just to be able to lift up their eyes and see—[\textit{She looks up and raises a hand to indicate the sky}]
—a sky not as black with savage, devouring birds as the sky that we saw in the Encantadas, Doctor.

DOCTOR:
—Mrs. Venable? I can't guarantee that a lobotomy would stop her—babbling!!

MRS. VENABLE:
That may be, maybe not, but after the operation, who would believe her, Doctor?

DOCTOR:
[\textit{Catharine Holly appears between the lace window curtains.}]

You're such an innocent person that it doesn't occur to you, it obviously hasn't even occurred to you that...
anybody less innocent than you are could possibly interpret this offer of a subsidy as—well, as sort of a bribe?

**MRS. VENABLE** [laughs throwing her head back]: Name it that—I don’t care—. There’s just two things to remember. She’s a destroyer. My son was a *creator*!—Now if my honesty’s shocked you—pick up your little black bag without the subsidy in it, and run away from this garden!—Nobody’s heard our conversation but you and I, Doctor Sugar. . . .

[*Miss Foxhill comes out of the house and calls.*]

**MISS FOXHILL:**
Mrs. Venable?

**MRS. VENABLE:**
What is it, what do you want, Miss Foxhill?

**MISS FOXHILL:**
Mrs. Venable? Miss Holly is here, with—

[*Mrs. Venable sees Catharine at the window.*]

**MRS. VENABLE:**
Oh, my God. There she is, in the window!—I told you I didn’t want her to enter my house again, I told you to meet them at the door and lead them around the side of the house to the garden and you didn’t listen. I’m not ready to face her. I have to have my five o’clock cocktail first, to fortify me. Take my chair inside. Doctor? Are you still here? I thought you’d run out of the garden. I’m going back through the garden to the other entrance. Doctor? Sugar? You may stay in the garden if you wish to or run out of the garden if you wish to or go in this way if you wish to or do anything that you wish to but I’m going to have my five o’clock daiquiri, frozen!—before I face her....

*[All during this she has been sailing very slowly off through the garden like a stately vessel at sea with a fair wind in her sails, a pirate’s frigate or a treasure-laden galleon. The young Doctor starts at Catharine framed by the lace window curtains. Sister Felicity appears beside her and draws her away from the window. Music: an ominous fanfare. Sister Felicity holds the door open for Catharine as the Doctor starts quickly forward. He starts to pick up his bag but doesn’t. Catharine rushes out, they almost collide with each other.]*

**CATHARINE:**
Excuse me.

**DOCTOR:**
I’m sorry... .

*[She looks after him as he goes into the house.]*

**SISTER FELICITY:**
Sit down and be still till your family come outside.

*DIM OUT*
Scene Two

Catharine removes a cigarette from a lacquered box on the table and lights it. The following quick, cadenced lines are accompanied by quick, dance-like movement, almost formal, as the Sister in her sweeping white habit, which should be starched to make a crackling sound, pursues the girl about the white wicker patio table and among the wicker chairs: this can be accompanied by quick music.

SISTER:
What did you take out of that box on the table?

CATHARINE:
Just a cigarette, Sister.

SISTER:
Put it back in the box.

CATHARINE:
Too late, it’s already lighted.

SISTER:
Give it here.

CATHARINE:
Oh, please, let me smoke, Sister!

SCENE TWO

SISTER:
Give it here.

CATHARINE:
Please, Sister Felicity.

SISTER:
Catharine, give it here. You know that you’re not allowed to smoke at Saint Mary’s.

CATHARINE:
We’re not at Saint Mary’s, this is an afternoon out.

SISTER:
You’re still in my charge. I can’t permit you to smoke because the last time you smoked you dropped a lighted cigarette on your dress and started a fire.

CATHARINE:
Oh, I did not start a fire. I just burned a hole in my skirt because I was half unconscious under medication. [She is now back of a white wicker chair.]

SISTER [overlapping her]:
Catharine, give it here.

CATHARINE:
Don’t be such a bully!

SISTER:
Disobedience has to be paid for later.

CATHARINE:
All right, I’ll pay for it later.

SISTER [overlapping]:
Give me that cigarette or I’ll make a report that’ll
put you right back on the violent ward, if you don't. [She claps her hands twice and holds one hand out across the table.]

CATHARINE [overlapping]:
I'm not being violent, Sister.

SISTER [overlapping]:
Give me that cigarette, I'm holding my hand out for it!

CATHARINE:
All right, take it, here, take it! [She thrusts the lighted end of the cigarette into the palm of the Sister's hand. The Sister cries out and sucks her burned hand.]

SISTER:
You burned me with it!

CATHARINE:
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to.

SISTER [shocked, hurt]:
You deliberately burned me!

CATHARINE [overlapping]:
You said give it to you and so I gave it to you.

SISTER [overlapping]:
You stuck the lighted end of that cigarette in my hand!

CATHARINE [overlapping]:
I'm sick, I'm sick—of being bossed and bullied!

SISTER [commandingly]:

SCENE TWO

Sit down!
[Catherine sits down stiffly in a white wicker chair on forestage, facing the audience. The sister resumes sucking the burned palm of her hand. Ten beats. Then from inside the house the whirr of a mechanical mixer.]

CATHARINE:
There goes the Waring Mixer, Aunt Violet's about to have her five o'clock frozen daiquiri, you could set a watch by it! [She almost laughs. Then she draws a deep, shuddering breath and leans back in her chair, but her hands remain clenched on the white wicker arms.]—We're in Sebastian's garden. My God, I can still cry!

SISTER:
Did you have any medication before you went out?

CATHARINE:
No. I didn't have any. Will you give me some, Sister?

SISTER [almost gently]:
I can't. I wasn't told to. However, I think the doctor will give you something.

CATHARINE:
The young blond man I bumped into?

SISTER:
Yes. The young doctor's a specialist from another hospital.

CATHARINE:
What hospital?
SCENE TWO

SISTER:
A word to the wise is sufficient...  
[The Doctor has appeared in the window.]

CATHARINE [rising abruptly]:
I knew I was being watched, he's in the window,  
staring out at me!

SISTER:
Sit down and be still. Your family's coming outside.

CATHARINE [overlapping]:
LION'S VIEW, IS IT! DOCTOR?  
[She has advanced toward the bay window. The  
Doctor draws back, letting the misty white gauze  
curtains down to obscure him.]

SISTER [rising with a restraining gesture which is  
almost pitying]:
Sit down, dear.

CATHARINE:
IS IT LION'S VIEW? DOCTOR?!  

SISTER:
Be still...  

CATHARINE:
WHEN CAN I STOP RUNNING DOWN THAT  
STEEP WHITE STREET IN CABEZA DE  
LOBO?

SISTER:
Catharine, dear, sit down.

CATHARINE:
I loved him, Sister! Why wouldn't he let me save

SCENE TWO

him? I tried to hold onto his hand but he struck me  
away and ran, ran, ran in the wrong direction, Sister!

SISTER:
Catharine, dear—be still.  
[The Sister sneezes.]

CATHARINE:
Bless you, Sister. [She says this absently, still watching  
the window.]

SISTER:
Thank you.

CATHARINE:
The Doctor's still at the window but he's too blond  
to hide behind window curtains, he catches the light,  
he shines through them. [She turns from the window.]
—We were going to blonds, blonds were next on the  
menu.

SISTER:
Be still now. Quiet, dear.

CATHARINE:
Cousin Sebastian said he was famished for blonds, he  
was fed up with the dark ones and was famished for  
blonds. All the travel brochures he picked up were  
advertisements of the blond northern countries. I  
think he'd already booked us to—Copenhagen or—  
Stockholm.—Fed up with dark ones, famished for  
light ones: that's how he talked about people, as if  
they were—items on a menu.—"That one's delicious-  
looking, that one is appetizing," or "that one is not  
appetizing"—I think because he was really nearly half-  
starved from living on pills and salads...
SCENE TWO

SISTER:  
Stop it!—Catharine, be still.

CATHARINE:  
He liked me and so I loved him. . . . [She cries a little again.] If he'd kept hold of my hand I could have saved him!—Sebastian suddenly said to me last summer: "Let's fly north, little bird—I want to walk under those radiant, cold northern lights—I've never seen the aurora borealis!"—Somebody said once or wrote, once: "We're all of us children in a vast kindergarten trying to spell God's name with the wrong alphabet blocks!"

MRS. HOLLY [offstage]:  
Sister?

[The Sister rises.]

CATHERINE [rising]:  
I think it's me they're calling, they call me "Sister," Sister!

Scene Three  
The Sister resumes her seat impassively as the girl's mother and younger brother appear from the garden. The mother, Mrs. Holly, is a fatuous Southern lady who requires no other description. The brother, George, is typically good-looking, he has the best "looks" of the family, tall and elegant of figure. They enter.

MRS. HOLLY:  
Catharine, dear! Catharine—  
[They embrace tentatively.]

Well, well! Doesn't she look fine, George?

GEORGE:  
Uh huh.

CATHARINE:  
They send you to the beauty parlor whenever you're going to have a family visit. Other times you look awful, you can't have a compact or lipstick or anything made out of metal because they're afraid you'll swallow it.

MRS. HOLLY [giving a tingly little laugh]:  
I think she looks just splendid, don't you, George?
GEORGE:
Can't we talk to her without the nun for a minute?

MRS. HOLLY:
Yes, I'm sure it's all right to. Sister?

CATHERINE:
Excuse me, Sister Felicity, this is my mother, Mrs. Holly, and my brother, George.

SISTER:
How do you do.

GEORGE:
How d'ya do.

CATHERINE:
This is Sister Felicity...

MRS. HOLLY:
We're so happy that Catharine's at Saint Mary's! So very grateful for all you're doing for her.

SISTER [sadly, mechanically]:
We do the best we can for her, Mrs. Holly.

MRS. HOLLY:
I'm sure you do. Yes, well—I wonder if you would mind if we had a little private chat with our Cathie?

SISTER:
I'm not supposed to let her out of my sight.

MRS. HOLLY:
It's just for a minute. You can sit in the hall or the garden and we'll call you right back here the minute the private part of the little talk is over.

SCENE THREE
[Sister Felicity withdraws with an uncertain nod and a swish of starched fabric.]

GEORGE [to Catherine]:
Jesus! What are you up to? Hub? Sister? Are you trying to RUIN us?!

MRS. HOLLY:
GAWGE! WILL YOU BE QUIET. You're upsetting your sister!
[He jumps up and stalks off a little, rapping his knee with his zipper-covered tennis racket.]

CATHERINE:
How elegant George looks.

MRS. HOLLY:
George inherited Cousin Sebastian's wardrobe but everything else is in probate! Did you know that? That everything else is in probate and Violet can keep it in probate just as long as she wants to?

CATHERINE:
Where is Aunt Violet?

MRS. HOLLY:
George, come back here!
[He does, sulkily.]

Violet's on her way down.

GEORGE:
Yeah. Aunt Violet has an elevator now.

MRS. HOLLY:
Yais, she has, she's had an elevator installed where the back stairs were, and, Sister, it's the cutest little
thing you ever did see! It's paneled in Chinese lacquer, black an' gold Chinese lacquer, with lovely bird-pictures on it. But there's only room for two people at a time in it. Gorge and I came down on foot—I think she's havin' her frozen daiquiri now, she still has a frozen daiquiri promptly at five o'clock every afternoon in the world... in warm weather.... Sister, the horrible death of Sebastian just about killed her!—She's now slightly better... but it's a question of time.—Dear, you know, I'm sure that you understand, why we haven't been out to see you at Saint Mary's. They said you were too disturbed, and a family visit might disturb you more. But I want you to know that nobody, absolutely nobody in the city, knows a thing about what you've been through. Have they, George? Not a thing. Not a soul even knows that you've come back from Europe. When people enquire, when they question us about you, we just say that you've stayed abroad to study something or other. [She catches her breath.] Now. Sister?—I want you to please be very careful what you say to your Aunt Violet about what happened to Sebastian in Cabeza de Lobo.

CATHARINE:
What do you want me to say about what—?

MRS. HOLLY:
Just don't repeat that same fantastic story! For my sake and George's sake, the sake of your brother and mother, don't repeat that horrible story again! Not to Violet! Will you?

CATHARINE:
Then I am going to have to tell Aunt Violet what happened to her son in Cabeza de Lobo.

MRS. HOLLY:
Honey, that's why you're here. She has INSISTED on hearing it straight from YOU!

GEORGE:
You were the only witness to it, Cathie.

CATHARINE:
No, there were others. That ran.

MRS. HOLLY:
Oh, Sister, you've just had a little sort of a—nightmare about it! Now, listen to me, will you, Sister? Sebastian has left, has BEQUEATHED!—to you an' Gawge in his will—

GEORGE: [religiously]:
To each of us, fifty grand, each!—AFTER! TAXES! —GET IT?

CATHARINE:
Oh, yes, but if they give me an injection—I won't have any choice but to tell exactly what happened in Cabeza de Lobo last summer. Don't you see? I won't have any choice but to tell the truth. It makes you tell the truth because it shuts something off that might make you able not to and everything comes out, decent or not decent, you have no control, but always, always the truth!

MRS. HOLLY:
Catharine, darling. I don't know the full story, but surely you're not too sick in your head to know in your heart that the story you've been telling is just—too—
GEORGE: [cutting in]:
Cathie, Cathie, you got to forget that story! Can'tcha?
For your fifty grand?

MRS. HOLLY:
Because if Aunt Vi contests the will, and we know
she'll contest it, she'll keep it in the courts forever!—
We'll be—

GEORGE:
It's in PROBATE NOW! And it'll never get out of
probate until you drop that story—we can't afford
to hire lawyers good enough to contest it! So if you
don't stop telling that crazy story, we won't have a
pot to—cook greens in!

[He turns away with a fierce grimace and a sharp,
abrupt wave of his hand, as if slapping down some-
thing. Catharine stands at his back for a moment
and laughs wildly.]

MRS. HOLLY:
Catharine, don't laugh like that, it scares me, Catharine.
[Jungle birds scream in the garden.]

GEORGE [turning his back on his sister]:
Cathie, the money is all tied up.
[He stoops over sofa, hands on flannel knees, speak-
ing directly into Catharine's face as if she were hard
of hearing. She raises a hand to touch his cheek
affectionately; he seizes the hand and removes it
but holds it tight.]

If Aunt Vi decided to contest Sebastian's will that
leaves us all of this cash?—Am I coming through to
you?

SCENE THREE

CATHARINE:
Yes, little brother, you are.

GEORGE:
You see, Mama, she's crazy like a coyote!
[He gives her a quick cold kiss]

We won't get a single damn penny, honest t' God
we won't! So you've just GOT to stop tellin' that
story about what you say happened to Cousin Seb-
bastian in Cabeza de Lobo, even if it's what it couldn't
be, TRUE!—You got to drop it, Sister, you can't tell
such a story to civilized people in a civilized up-to-
date country!

MRS. HOLLY:
Cathie, why, why, why!—did you invent such a tale?

CATHARINE:
But, Mother, I DIDN'T invent it. I know it's a hide-
ous story but it's a true story of our time and the
world we live in and what did truly happen to Cousin
Sebastian in Cabeza de Lobo....

GEORGE:
Oh, then you are going to tell it. Mama, she IS going
to tell it! Right to Aunt Vi, and lose us a hundred
thousand!—Cathie? You are a BITCH!

MRS. HOLLY:
GAWGE!

GEORGE:
I repeat it, a bitch! She isn't crazy, Mama, she's no
more crazy than I am, she's just, just—PERVERSE!
Was ALWAYS!—perverse....
Scene Three

[Catharine turns away and breaks into quiet sobbing.]

Mrs. Holly:
Gawge, Gawge, apologize to Sister, this is no way for you to talk to your sister. You come right back over here and tell your sweet little sister you’re sorry you spoke like that to her!

George [turning back to Catherine]:
I’m sorry, Cathie, but you know we NEED that money! Mama and me, we—Cathie? I got ambitions! And, Cathie, I’m YOUNG!—I want things, I need them, Cathie! So will you please think about ME? Us?

Miss Foxhill [offstage]:
Mrs. Holly? Mrs. Holly?

Mrs. Holly:
Somebody’s callin’ fo’ me. Catharine, Gawge put it very badly but you know that it’s TRUE! WE DO HAVE TO GET WHAT SEBASTIAN HAS LEFT US IN HIS WILL, DEAREST! AND YOU WON’T LET US DOWN? PROMISE? YOU WON’T? LET US DOWN?

George [fiercely shouting]: HERE COMES AUNT VI! Mama, Cathie, Aunt Violet’s—here is Aunt Vi!

Scene Four

Mrs. Venable enters downstage area. Entrance music.

Mrs. Holly:
Cathie! Here’s Aunt Vi!

Mrs. Venable:
She sees me and I see her. That’s all that’s necessary. Miss Foxhill, put my chair in this corner. Crank the back up a little.

[Miss Foxhill does this business.]

More. More. Not that much!—Let it back down a little. All right. Now, then. I’ll have my frozen daiquiri, now. . . . Do any of you want coffee?

George:
I’d like a chocolate malt.

Mrs. Holly:
Gawge!

Mrs. Venable:
This isn’t a drugstore.

Mrs. Holly:
Oh, Gawge is just being Gawge.
Scene Four

He didn't make a phone call, he received a phone call from—

Miss Roxanna: Phone call?

Why does he choose such a moment to make a phone call in the library?

Mrs. Venaria: Yes, yes! Where is the doctor?

And here's the report of the private investigators and

Mrs. Venaria: ... Oh

Separate! Yes, here it is—

Miss Roxanna: I asked for the English transcript! It's in a separate—

Mrs. Venaria: the American consul!

All your correspondence with the police there and

Here's the portfolio marked Cabesa de Lobo. He has—

[Miss Roxanna begins a cardboard folder labeled Mrs.

There's what I thought he was bringing—

Mrs. Venaria: A bundle—

But—lately she speaks in a breathless gibberish.]

Catherine: Miss Roxanna, why are you talking like a little desperate girl?

Miss Roxanna: [Miss Roxanna begins a cardboard folder labeled Mrs.

I found a little Jew tailor on Britannia Street that

George: Cawee, tell Aunt Violet how grateful you are for—

Mrs. Holty [quickly]:

George: I didn't know you'd parade them in front of me,

You gave them to me, Aunt Violet?

in clothes that belonged to my soul,

come here this afternoon unnoticed from head to foot

I can hear the sound of the matinée and God ease to

Mrs. Venaria: Junior did.

Junior campus and went Phil DeLisle because Paul

received bids from every good fraternity on the
campus. Did you hear that? There are
catharsis.

Catherine: Aunt Violet, she's frightened—Can I move? Can I get up and move around all night?

Miss Roxanna: [Miss Roxanna begins a cardboard folder labeled Mrs.

There's what I thought he was bringing—

Mrs. Venaria: A bundle—

But—lately she speaks in a breathless gibberish.]

George: Cawee, tell Aunt Violet how grateful you are for—

Mrs. Holty [quickly]:

George: I didn't know you'd parade them in front of me,

You gave them to me, Aunt Violet?

in clothes that belonged to my soul,

come here this afternoon unnoticed from head to foot

I can hear the sound of the matinée and God ease to

Mrs. Venaria: Junior did.

Junior campus and went Phil DeLisle because Paul

received bids from every good fraternity on the
campus. Did you hear that? There are
catharsis.

Catherine: Aunt Violet, she's frightened—Can I get up and move around all night?
SCENE FOUR

Sebastian’s wonderful, wonderful bequest to Gawge an’ Cathie is going to be tied up a while?

GEORGE:
Aunt Vi? About the will?
[Mrs. Holly coughs.]

I was just wondering if we can’t figure out some way to, to—

MRS. HOLLY:
Gawge means to EXPEDITE it! To get through the red tape quicker?

MRS. VENABLE:
I understand his meaning. Foxhill, get the Doctor.
[She has risen with her cane and hobbled to the door.]

MISS FOXHILL [exits calling]:
Doctor!

MRS. HOLLY:
Gawge, no more about money.

GEORGE:
How do we know we’ll ever see her again?
[Catharine gasps and rises; she moves downstage, followed quickly by Sister Felicity.]

SISTER [mechanically]:
What’s wrong, dear?

CATHARINE:
I think I’m just dreaming this, it doesn’t seem real!
[Miss Foxhill comes back out, saying:]

MISS FOXHILL:
He had to answer an urgent call from Lion’s View.
[Slight, tense pause.]

MRS. HOLLY:
Violet! Not Lion’s View!
[Sister Felicity had started conducting Catharine back to the patio; she stops her, now.]

SISTER:
Wait, dear.

CATHARINE:
What for? I know what’s coming.

MRS. VENABLE [at same time]:
Why? are you all prepared to put out a thousand a month plus extra charge for treatments to keep the girl at St. Mary’s?

MRS. HOLLY:
Cathie? Cathie, dear?
[Catharine has returned with the Sister.]

Tell Aunt Violet how grateful you are for her makin’ it possible for you to rest an’ recuperate at such a sweet, sweet place as St. Mary’s!

CATHARINE:
No place for lunatics is a sweet, sweet place.

MRS. HOLLY:
But the food’s good there. Isn’t the food good there?

CATHARINE:
Just give me written permission not to eat fried grits. I had yard privileges till I refused to eat fried grits.
SCENE FOUR
sister:
She lost yard privileges because she couldn't be trusted in the yard without constant supervision or even with cars on the highway.

Sister: I did that because I've been trying for weeks to get a message out of that "sweet, sweet place."

CATHARINE: What message, dear?

MRS. HOLLY: Sister, I don't understand.

GEORGE: What are you scared of, Sister?

CATHARINE: What they might do to me now, after they've done all the rest! That man in the window's a specialist from Lion's View! We get newspapers. I know what they're... [The Doctor comes out.]

MRS. VENABLE: Why, doctor, I thought you'd left us with just that little black bag to remember you by!

DOCTOR: Oh, no! Don't you remember our talk? I had to answer a call about a patient that...
MRS. VENABLE:
Good! In that case.

DOCTOR:
I think a quiet atmosphere will get us the best results.

MRS. VENABLE:
I don’t know what you mean by a quiet atmosphere. She shouted, I didn’t.

DOCTOR:
Mrs. Venable, let’s try to keep things on a quiet level, now. Your niece seems to be disturbed.

MRS. VENABLE:
She has every reason to be. She took my son from me, and then she—

CATHARINE:
Aunt Violet, you’re not being fair.

MRS. VENABLE:
Oh, aren’t I?

CATHARINE [to the others]:
She’s not being fair.

[Then back to Mrs. Venable:]

Aunt Violet, you know why Sebastian asked me to travel with him.

MRS. VENABLE:
Yes, I do know why!

CATHARINE:
You weren’t able to travel. You’d had a—[She stops short.]

SCENE FOUR

MRS. VENABLE:
Go on! What had I had? Are you afraid to say it in front of the Doctor? She meant that I had a stroke.
—I DID NOT HAVE A STROKE!—I had a slight aneurism. You know what that is, Doctor? A little vascular convulsion! Not a hemorrhage, just a little convulsion of a blood-vessel. I had it when I discovered that she was trying to take my son away from me. Then I had it. It gave a little temporary—muscular—contraction.—To one side of my face. . . . [She crosses back into main acting area.] These people are not blood-relatives of mine, they’re my dead husband’s relations. I always detested these people, my dead husband’s sister and—her two worthless children. But I did more than my duty to keep their heads above water. To please my son, whose weakness was being excessively soft-hearted, I went to the expense and humiliation, yes, public humiliation, of giving this girl a debut which was a fiasco. Nobody liked her when I brought her out. Oh, she had some kind of—notoriety! She had a sharp tongue that some people mistook for wit. A habit of laughing in the faces of decent people which would infuriate them, and also reflected adversely on me and Sebastian, too. But, he, Sebastian, was amused by this girl. While I was disgusted, sickened. And halfway through the season, she was dropped off the party lists, yes, dropped off the lists in spite of my position. Why? Because she’d lost her head over a young married man, made a scandalous scene at a Mardi Gras ball, in the middle of the ballroom. Then everybody dropped her like a hot—rock, but—[She loses her breath.] My son, Sebastian, still felt sorry for her and took her with him last summer instead of me. . . .

CATHARINE [springing up with a cry]:
I can’t change truth, I’m not God! I’m not even sure
that He could, I don’t think God can change truth! How can I change the story of what happened to her son in Cabeza de Lobo?

MRS. VENABLE [at the same time]:
She was in love with my son!

CATHARINE [overlapping]:
Let me go back to Saint Mary’s. Sister Felicity, let’s go back to Saint—

MRS. VENABLE [overlapping]:
Oh, no! That’s not where you’ll go!

CATHARINE [overlapping]:
All right, Lion’s View but don’t ask me to—

MRS. VENABLE [overlapping]:
You know that you were!

CATHARINE [overlapping]:
That I was what, Aunt Violet?

MRS. VENABLE [overlapping]:
Don’t call me “Aunt,” you’re the niece of my dead husband, not me!

MRS. HOLLY [overlapping]:
Catharine, Catharine, don’t upset your—Doctor? Oh, Doctor!
[But the Doctor is calmly observing the scene, with detachment. The jungle garden is loud with the sounds of its feathered and scaled inhabitants.]

CATHARINE:
I don’t want to, I didn’t want to come here! I know what she thinks, she thinks I murdered her son, she thinks that I was responsible for his death.

MRS. VENABLE:
That’s right. I told him when he told me that he was going with you in my place last summer that I’d never see him again and I never did. And only you know why!

CATHARINE:
Oh, my God, I—
[She rushes out toward garden, followed immediately by the Sister.]

SISTER:
Miss Catharine, Miss Catharine—

DOCTOR [overlapping]:
Mrs. Venable?

SISTER [overlapping]:
Miss Catharine?

DOCTOR [overlapping]:
Mrs. Venable?

MRS. VENABLE:
What?

DOCTOR:
I’d like to be left alone with Miss Catharine for a few minutes.

MRS. HOLLY:
George, talk to her, George.
[George crouches appealingly before the old lady’s
SCENE FOUR

chair, peering close into her face, a band on her knee.]

GEORGE:
Aunt Vi? Cathie can't go to Lion's View. Everyone in the Garden District would know you'd put your niece in a state asylum, Aunt Vi.

MRS. VENABLE:
Foxhill!

GEORGE:
What do you want, Aunt Vi?

MRS. VENABLE:
Let go of my chair. Foxhill? Get me away from these people!

GEORGE:
Aunt Vi, listen, think of the talk it—

MRS. VENABLE:
I can't get up! Push me, push me away!

GEORGE [rising but holding chair]:
I'll push her, Miss Foxhill.

MRS. VENABLE:
Let go of my chair or—

MISS FOXHILL:
Mr. Holly, I—

GEORGE:
I got to talk to her.
[He pushes her chair downstage.]
SCENE FOUR

CATHARINE:
You don’t have to hold onto me. I can’t run away.

DOCTOR:
Miss Catharine?

CATHARINE:
What?

DOCTOR:
Your aunt is a very sick woman. She had a stroke last spring?

CATHARINE:
Yes, she did, but she’ll never admit it . . .

DOCTOR:
You have to understand why.

CATHARINE:
I do, I understand why. I didn’t want to come here.

DOCTOR:
Miss Catharine, do you hate her?

CATHARINE:
I don’t understand what hate is. How can you hate anybody and still be sane? You see, I still think I’m sane!

DOCTOR:
You think she did have a stroke?

CATHARINE:
She had a slight stroke in April. It just affected one side, the left side, of her face . . . but it was disfiguring, and after that, Sebastian couldn’t use her.

DOCTOR:
Use her? Did you say use her?

[The sounds of the jungle garden are not loud but ominous.]

CATHARINE:
Yes, we all use each other and that’s what we think of as love, and not being able to use each other is what’s—hate . . .

DOCTOR:
Do you hate her, Miss Catharine?

CATHARINE:
Didn’t you ask me that, once? And didn’t I say that I didn’t understand hate. A ship struck an iceberg at sea—everyone sinking—

DOCTOR:
Go on, Miss Catharine!

CATHARINE:
But that’s no reason for everyone drowning for hating everyone drowning! Is it, Doctor?

DOCTOR:
Tell me: what was your feeling for your cousin Sebastian?

CATHARINE:
He liked me and so I loved him.

DOCTOR:
In what way did you love him?

CATHARINE:
The only way he’d accept:—a sort of motherly way. I tried to save him, Doctor.
SCENE FOUR

DOCTOR:
From what? Save him from what?

CATHARINE:
Completing—a sort of!—image!—he had of himself as a sort of!—sacrifice to a!—terrible sort of a—

DOCTOR:
—God?

CATHARINE:
Yes, a—cruel one, Doctor!

DOCTOR:
How did you feel about that?

CATHARINE:
Doctor, my feelings are the sort of feelings that you have in a dream. . .

DOCTOR:
Your life doesn’t seem real to you?

CATHARINE:
Suddenly last winter I began to write my journal in the third person.
[He grasps her elbow and leads her out upon fore-stage. At the same time Miss Foxhill wheels Mrs. Venable off, Mrs. Holly weeps into a handkerchief and George rises and shrugs and turns his back to the audience.]

DOCTOR:
Something happened last winter?

CATHARINE:
At a Mardi Gras ball some—some boy that took me to it got too drunk to stand up! [A short, mirthless note of laughter.] I wanted to go home. My coat was in the cloakroom, they couldn’t find the check for it in his pockets. I said, “Oh, hell, let it go!”—I started out for a taxi. Somebody took my arm and said, “I’ll drive you home.” He took off his coat as we left the hotel and put it over my shoulders, and then I looked at him and—I don’t think I’d ever seen him before then, really!—He took me home in his car but took me another place first. We stopped near the Duelling Oaks at the end of Esplanade Street. . . Stopped!—I said, “What for?”—He didn’t answer, just struck a match in the car to light a cigarette in the car and I looked at him in the car and I knew “what for!”—I think I got out of the car before he got out of the car, and we walked through the wet grass to the great misty oaks as if somebody was calling us for help there!
[Pause. The subdued, toneless bird-cries in the garden turn to a single bird-song.]

DOCTOR:
After that?

CATHARINE:
I lost him.—He took me home and said an awful thing to me. “We’d better forget it,” he said, “my wife’s expecting a child and—” —I just entered the house and sat there thinking a little and then I suddenly called a taxi and went right back to the Roosevelt Hotel ballroom. The ball was still going on. I thought I’d gone back to pick up my borrowed coat but that wasn’t what I’d gone back for. I’d gone back to make a scene on the floor of the ballroom, yes, I didn’t stop at the cloakroom to pick up Aunt Violet’s old mink stole, no, I rushed right into the ballroom and spotted him on the floor and ran up to him and beat him as
SCENE FOUR

hard as I could in the face and chest with my fists till
—Cousin Sebastian took me away.—After that, the next
morning, I started writing my diary in the third
person, singular, such as “She’s still living this morn-
ing,” meaning that I was. . . . “WHAT’S NEXT
FOR HER? GOD KNOWS!”—I couldn’t go out any
more.—However one morning my Cousin Sebastian
came in my bedroom and said: “Get up!”—Well . . .
if you’re still alive after dying, well then, you’re
obedient, Doctor.—I got up. He took me downtown
to a place for passport photos. Said: “Mother can’t
go abroad with me this summer. You’re going to go
with me this summer instead of Mother.”—If you
don’t believe me, read my journal of Paris!—“She
woke up at daybreak this morning, had her coffee and
dressed and took a brief walk—”

DOCTOR:
Who did?

CATHARINE:
She did. I did—from the Hotel Plaza Athénée to the
Place de l’Etoile as if pursued by a pack of Siberian
wolves! [She laughs her tired, helpless laugh.]—Went
right through all stop signs—couldn’t wait for green
signals.—“Where did she think she was going? Back
to the Duelling Oaks?”—Everything chilly and dim
but his hot, ravenous mouth! on—

DOCTOR:
Miss Catharine, let me give you something;
[The others go out, leaving Catharine and the
Doctor onstage.]

CATHARINE:
Do I have to have the injection again, this time? What
am I going to be stuck with this time, Doctor? I
don’t care. I’ve been stuck so often that if you con-

SCENE FOUR

doctor [preparing needle]:
Please take off your jacket.
[She does. The Doctor gives her an injection.]

CATHARINE:
I didn’t feel it.

DOCTOR:
That’s good. Now sit down.
[She sits down.]

CATHARINE:
Shall I start counting backwards from a hundred?

DOCTOR:
Do you like counting backwards?

CATHARINE:
Love it! Just love it! One hundred! Ninety-nine!
Ninety-eight! Ninety-seven. Ninety-six. Ninety-
five.—Oh!—I already feel it! How funny!

DOCTOR:
That’s right. Close your eyes for a minute.
[He moves his chair closer to hers. Half a minute
passes.]

Miss Catharine? I want you to give me something.

CATHARINE:
Name it and it’s yours, Doctor Sugar.

DOCTOR:
Give me all your resistance.
CATHARINE: Resistance to what?

DOCTOR: The truth. Which you're going to tell me.

CATHARINE: The truth's the one thing I have never resisted!

DOCTOR: Sometimes people just think they don't resist it, but still do.

CATHARINE: They say it's at the bottom of a bottomless well, you know.

DOCTOR: Relax.

CATHARINE: Truth.

DOCTOR: Don't talk.

CATHARINE: Where was I, now? At ninety?

DOCTOR: You don't have to count backwards.

CATHARINE: At ninety something?

DOCTOR: You can open your eyes.

CATHARINE: Oh, I do feel funny!

[Silence, pause.]

You know what I think you're doing? I think you're trying to hypnotize me. Aren't you? You're looking so straight at me and doing something to me with your eyes and your—eyes... Is that what you're doing to me?

DOCTOR: Is that what you feel I'm doing?

CATHARINE: Yes! I feel so peculiar. And it's not just the drug.

DOCTOR: Give me all your resistance. See, I'm holding my hand out. I want you to put yours in mine and give me all your resistance. Pass all of your resistance out of your hand to mine.

CATHARINE: Here's my hand. But there's no resistance in it.

DOCTOR: You are totally passive.

CATHARINE: Yes, I am.

DOCTOR: You will do what I ask.

CATHARINE: Yes, I will try.
SCENE FOUR

CATHARINE:
No, I didn't. I did what I wanted to do without you telling me to.
[She holds him tight against her.]

Let me! Let! Let! Let me! Let me, let me, oh, let me....
[She crushes her mouth to his violently. He tries to disengage himself. She presses her lips to his fiercely, clutching his body against her. Her brother George enters.]

Please hold me! I've been so lonely. It's lonelier than death, if I've gone mad, it's lonelier than death!

GEORGE [shocked, disgusted]:
Cathie!—you've got a hell of a nerve.
[She falls back, panting, covers her face, runs a few paces and grabs the back of a chair. Mrs. Holly enters.]

MRS. HOLLY:
What's the matter, George? Is Catharine ill?

GEORGE:
No.

CATHARINE:
How funny! Now I can! Oh, I do feel dizzy! Help me, I'm—
[He rushes to support her.]

—about to fall over....
[He holds her. She looks out vaguely toward the brilliant, steaming garden. Looks back at him. Suddenly sways toward him, against him.]

MRS. HOLLY:
What did he say about Catharine?
[Catharine has gone out into the dazzling jungle of the garden.]

SISTER [returning]:
She's gone into the garden.

DOCTOR:
You see, you lost your balance.

CATHARINE:
Yes, I will.

DOCTOR:
The absolutely true story. No lies, nothing not spoken.
Everything told, exactly.

CATHARINE:
Everything. Exactly. Because I'll have to. Can I—can I stand up?

DOCTOR:
Yes, but be careful. You might feel a little bit dizzy.
[She struggles to rise, then falls back.]

CATHARINE:
I can't get up! Tell me to. Then I think I could do it.

DOCTOR:
Stand up.
[She rises unsteadily.]
DOCTOR:
That’s all right, she’ll come back when I call her.

SISTER:
It may be all right for you. You’re not responsible
for her.

[Mrs. Venable has re-entered.]

MRS. VENABLE:
Call her now!

DOCTOR:
Miss Catharine! Come back.

[To the Sister:]

Bring her back, please, Sister!

[Catharine enters quietly, a little unsteady.]

Now, Miss Catharine, you’re going to tell the true
story.

CATHARINE:
Where do I start the story?

DOCTOR:
Wherever you think it started.

CATHARINE:
I think it started the day he was born in this house.

MRS. VENABLE:
Ha! You see!

GEORGE:
Cathie.

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DOCTOR:
Let’s start later than that. [Pause.] Shall we begin
with last summer?

CATHARINE:
Oh. Last summer.

DOCTOR:
Yes. Last summer.

[There is a long pause. The raucous sounds in the
garden fade into a bird-song which is clear and
sweet. Mrs. Holly coughs. Mrs. Venable stirs im-
patiently. George crosses downstage to catch
Catharine’s eye as he lights a cigarette.]

CATHARINE:
Could I—?

MRS. VENABLE:
Keep that boy away from her!

GEORGE:
She wants to smoke, Aunt Vi.

CATHARINE:
Something helps in the—hands. . . .

SISTER:
Unh unh!

DOCTOR:
It’s all right, Sister. [He lights her cigarette.] About
last summer: how did it begin?

CATHARINE:
It began with his kindness and the six days at sea that
took me so far away from the—Dueling Oaks that I
Scene Four

forgot them, nearly. He was affectionate with me, so sweet and attentive to me, that some people took us for a honeymoon couple until they noticed that we had—separate staterooms, and—then in Paris, he took me to Patou and Schiaparelli's—this is from Schiaparelli's! [Like a child, she indicates her suit]—bought me so many new clothes that I gave away my old ones to make room for my new ones in my new luggage to—travel. . . . I turned into a peacock! Of course, so was be one, too. . . .

George:
Ha Ha!

Mrs. Venable:
Shh!

Catharine:
But then I made the mistake of responding too much to his kindness, of taking hold of his hand before he'd take hold of mine, of holding onto his arm and leaning on his shoulder, of appreciating his kindness more than he wanted me to, and, suddenly, last summer, he began to be restless, and—oh!

Doctor:
Go on.

Catharine:
The Blue Jay notebook!

Doctor:
Did you say notebook?

Mrs. Venable:
I know what she means by that, she's talking about the school composition book with a Blue Jay trade-
something that rests on something as thin and fine as the web of a spider, Doctor. That's all that holds him over!—out of destruction. . . . Few, very few are able to do it alone! Great help is needed! I did give it! She didn't.

CATHARINE:
She's right about that. I failed him. I wasn't able to keep the web from—breaking. . . . I saw it breaking but couldn't save or—repair it!

MRS. VENABLE:
There now, the truth's coming out. We had an agreement between us, a sort of contract or covenant between us which he broke last summer when he broke away from me and took her with him, not me! When he was frightened and I knew when and what of, because his hands would shake and his eyes looked in, not out, I'd reach across a table and touch his hands and say not a word, just look, and touch his hands with my hand until his hands stopped shaking and his eyes looked out, not in, and in the morning, the poem would be continued. Continued until it was finished!

[The following ten speeches are said very rapidly, overlapping.]

CATHARINE:
I—couldn't!

MRS. VENABLE:
Naturally not! He was mine! I knew how to help him, I could! You didn't, you couldn't!

DOCTOR:
These interruptions—

MRS. VENABLE:
I would say "You will" and he would, I—!

CATHARINE:
Yes, you see, I failed him! And so, last summer, we went to Cabeza de Lobo, we flew down there from where he gave up writing his poem last summer. . . .

MRS. VENABLE:
Because he'd broken our—

CATHARINE:
Yes! Yes, something had broken, that string of pearls that old mothers hold their sons by like a—sort of a—sort of—umbilical cord, long—after . . .

MRS. VENABLE:
She means that I held him back from—

DOCTOR:
Please!

MRS. VENABLE:
Destruction!

CATHARINE:
All I know is that suddenly, last summer, he wasn't young any more, and we went to Cabeza de Lobo, and he suddenly switched from the evenings to the beach. . . .

DOCTOR:
From evenings? To beach?

CATHARINE:
I mean from the evenings to the afternoons and from the fa—fash—
SCENE FOUR

[Silence: Mrs. Holly draws a long, long painful breath. George stirs impatiently.]

DOCTOR:
Fashionable! Is that the word you—?

CATHARINE:
Yes. Suddenly, last summer Cousin Sebastian changed to the afternoons and the beach.

DOCTOR:
What beach?

CATHARINE:
In Cabeza de Lobo there is a beach that's named for Sebastian's name saint, it's known as La Playa San Sebastian, and that's where we started spending all afternoon, every day.

DOCTOR:
What kind of beach was it?

CATHARINE:
It was a big city beach near the harbor.

DOCTOR:
It was a big public beach?

CATHARINE:
Yes, public.

MRS. VENABLE:
It's little statements like that that give her away.

[The Doctor rises and crosses to Mrs. Venable, without breaking his concentration on Catharine.]

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After all I've told you about his fastidiousness, can you accept such a statement?

DOCTOR:
You mustn't interrupt her.

MRS. VENABLE [overlapping him]:
That Sebastian would go every day to some dirty free public beach near a harbor? A man that had to go out a mile in a boat to find water to swim in?

DOCTOR:
Mrs. Venable, no matter what she says you have to let her say it without any more interruptions or this interview will be useless.

MRS. VENABLE:
I won't speak again. I'll keep still, if it kills me.

CATHARINE:
I don't want to go on... .

DOCTOR:
Go on with the story. Every afternoon last summer your Cousin Sebastian and you want out to this free public beach?

CATHARINE:
No, it wasn't the free one, the free one was right next to it, there was a fence between the free beach and the one that we went to that charged a small charge of admission.

DOCTOR:
Yes, and what did you do there?

[He still stands beside Mrs. Venable and the light gradually changes as the girl gets deeper into her]
SCENE FOUR

he felt you were moody? Lonely? He wanted to shock you out of your depression last summer?

CATHarine:
Don't you understand? I was PROCURING for him! [Mrs. Venable's gasp is like the sound that a great booked fish might make.]

She used to do it, too. [Mrs. Venable cries out.]

Not consciously! She didn't know that she was procuring for him in the smart, the fashionable places they used to go to before last summer! Sebastian was shy with people. She wasn't. Neither was I. We both did the same thing for him, made contacts for him, but she did it in nice places and in decent ways and I had to do it the way that I just told you!—Sebastian was lonely, Doctor, and the empty Blue Jay notebook got bigger and bigger, so big it was big and empty as that big empty blue sea and sky... I knew what I was doing. I came out in the French Quarter years before I came out in the Garden District. . . .

MRS. HOLLY:
Oh, Cathie! Sister . . .

Doctor:
Hush!

CATHarine:
And before long, when the weather got warmer and the beach so crowded, he didn't need me any more for that purpose. The ones on the free beach began to climb over the fence or swim around it, bands of homeless young people that lived on the free beach like scavenger dogs, hungry children. . . . So now he
let me wear a decent dark suit. I'd go to a faraway empty end of the beach, write postcards and letters and keep up my—third-person journal till it was—five o'clock and time to meet him outside the bathhouses, on the street. . . . He would come out, followed.

DOCTOR:
Who would follow him out?

CATHARINE:
The homeless, hungry young people that had climbed over the fence from the free beach that they lived on. He'd pass out tips among them as if they'd all—shined his shoes or called taxis for him. . . . Each day the crowd was bigger, noisier, greedier!—Sebastian began to be frightened.—At last we stopped going out there. . . .

DOCTOR:
And then? After that? After you quit going out to the public beach?

CATHARINE:
Then one day, a few days after we stopped going out to the beach—it was one of those white blazing days in Cabeza de Lobo, not a blazing hot blue one but a blazing hot white one.

DOCTOR:
Yes?

CATHARINE:
We had a late lunch at one of those open-air restaurants on the sea there.—Sebastian was white as the weather. He had on a spotless white silk Shantung suit and a white silk tie and a white Panama and white shoes, white—white lizard skin—pumps! He—[She

SCENE FOUR

throws back her head in a startled laugh at the recollection]—kept touching his face and his throat here and there with a white silk handkerchief and popping little white pills in his mouth, and I knew he was having a bad time with his heart and was frightened about it and that was the reason we hadn't gone out to the beach. . . .

[During the monologue the lights have changed, the surrounding area has dimmed out and a hot white spot is focused on Catharine.]

"I think we ought to go north," he kept saying, "I think we've done Cabeza de Lobo, I think we've done it, don't you?" I thought we'd done it!—but I had learned it was better not to seem to have an opinion because if I did, well, Sebastian, well, you know Sebastian, he always preferred to do what no one else wanted to do, and I always tried to give the impression that I was agreeing reluctantly to his wishes. . . . it was a—game. . . .

SISTER:
She's dropped her cigarette.

DOCTOR:
I've got it, Sister.

[There are whispers, various movements in the penumbra. The Doctor fills a glass for her from the cocktail shaker.]

CATHARINE:
Where was I? Oh, yes, that five o'clock lunch at one of those fish-places along the harbor of Cabeza de Lobo, it was between the city and the sea, and there were naked children along the beach which was fenced off with barbed wire from the restaurant and
we had our tables less than a yard from the barbed wire fence that held the beggars at bay. . . . There were naked children along the beach, a band of frightfully thin and dark naked children that looked like a flock of plucked birds, and they would come darting up to the barbed wire fence as if blown there by the wind, the hot white wind from the sea, all crying out, "Pan, pan, pan!"

**DOCTOR [quietly]:**
What's pan?

**CATHARINE:**
The word for bread, and they made gobbling noises with their little black mouths, stuffing their little black fists to their mouths and making those gobbling noises, with frightful grins!—Of course we were sorry that we had come to this place but it was too late to go. . . .

**DOCTOR [quietly]:**
Why was it "too late to go"?

**CATHARINE:**
I told you Cousin Sebastian wasn't well. He was popping those little white pills in his mouth. I think he had popped in so many of them that they had made him feel weak. . . . His, his!—eyes looked—dazed, but he said: "Don't look at those little monsters. Beggars are a social disease in this country. If you look at them, you get sick of the country, it spoils the whole country for you... ."

**DOCTOR:**
Go on.

**CATHARINE:**
I'm going on. I have to wait now and then till it gets clearer. Under the drug it has to be a vision, or nothing comes. . . .

**DOCTOR:**
All right?

**CATHARINE:**
Always when I was with him I did what he told me. I didn't look at the band of naked children, not even when the waiters drove them away from the barbed wire fence with sticks!—Rushing out through a wicket gate like an assault party in war!—and beating them screaming away from the barbed wire fence with the sticks. . . . Then! [Pause.]

**DOCTOR:**
Go on, Miss Catherine, what comes next in the vision?

**CATHARINE:**
The, the the!—band of children began to—serenade us. . . .

**DOCTOR:**
Do what?

**CATHARINE:**
Play for us! On instruments! Make music!—if you could call it music. . . .

**DOCTOR:**
Oh?

**CATHARINE:**
Their, their—-instruments were—-instruments of percussion!—Do you know what I mean?
SCENE FOUR

DOCTOR [making a note]:
Yes. Instruments of percussion such as—drums?

CATHARINE:
I stole glances at them when Cousin Sebastian wasn’t looking, and as well as I could make out in the white blaze of the sand-beach, the instruments were tin cans strung together.

DOCTOR [slowly, writing]:
Tin—cans—strung—together.

CATHARINE:
And, and, and, and—AND!—bits of metal, other bits of metal that had been flattened out, made into—

DOCTOR:
What?

CATHARINE:
Cymbals! You know? Cymbals?

DOCTOR:
Yes. Brass plates hit together.

CATHARINE:
That’s right, Doctor.—Tin cans flattened out and clashed together!—Cymbals.

DOCTOR:
Yes. I understand. What’s after that, in the vision?

CATHARINE [rapidly, panting a little]:
And others had paper bags, bags made out of—coarse paper!—with something on a string inside the bags which they pulled up and down, back and forth, to make a sort of a—

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DOCTOR:
Sort of a—?

CATHARINE:
Noise like—

DOCTOR:
Noise like?

CATHARINE [rising stiffly from chair]:
Ooompa! Ooompa! Oooooooompa!

DOCTOR:
Ahhh . . . a sound like a tuba?

CATHARINE:
That’s right!—they made a sound like a tuba. . . .

DOCTOR:
Ooompa, oompa, oompa, like a tuba. [He is making a note of the description.]

CATHARINE:
Ooompa, oompa, oompa, like a—[Short pause.]

DOCTOR:
—Tuba. . . .

CATHARINE:
All during lunch they stayed at a—a fairly close—distance. . . .

DOCTOR:
Go on with the vision, Miss Catharine.
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CATHARINE [striding about the table]:
Oh, I’m going on, nothing could stop it now!!

DOCTOR:
Your Cousin Sebastian was entertained by this—concert?

CATHARINE:
I think he was terrified of it!

DOCTOR:
Why was he terrified of it?

CATHARINE:
I think he recognized some of the musicians, some of the boys, between childhood and—older... 

DOCTOR:
What did he do? Did he do anything about it, Miss Catharine?—Did he complain to the manager about it?

CATHARINE:
What manager? God! Oh, no!—The manager of the fishplace on the beach? Haha!—No!—You don’t understand my cousin!

DOCTOR:
What do you mean?

CATHARINE:
He!—accepted!—all!—as—how!—things!—are!—And thought nobody had any right to complain or interfere in any way whatsoever, and even though he knew that what was awful was awful, that what was wrong was wrong, and my Cousin Sebastian was certainly never sure that anything was wrong!—He thought it unfitting to ever take any action about anything whatsoever!—except to go on doing as something in him directed... 

DOCTOR:
What did something in him direct him to do?—I mean on this occasion in Cabeza de Lobo.

CATHARINE:
After the salad, before they brought the coffee, he suddenly pushed himself away from the table, and said, “They’ve got to stop that! Waiter, make them stop that. I’m not a well man, I have a heart condition, it’s making me sick!”—This was the first time that Cousin Sebastian had ever attempted to correct a human situation!—I think perhaps that that was his fatal error... It was then that the waiters, all eight or ten of them, charged out of the barbed wire wicket gate and beat the little musicians away with clubs and skillets and anything hard that they could snatch from the kitchen!—Cousin Sebastian left the table. He stalked out of the restaurant after throwing a handful of paper money on the table and he fled from the place. I followed. It was all white outside. White hot, a blazing white hot, hot blazing white, at five o’clock in the afternoon in the city of—Cabeza de Lobo. It looked as if—

DOCTOR:
It looked as if?

CATHARINE:
As if a huge white bone had caught on fire in the sky and blazed so bright it was white and turned the sky and everything under the sky white with it!

DOCTOR:
—White...
CATHARINE:
Yes—white . . .

DOCTOR:
You followed your Cousin Sebastian out of the restaurant onto the hot white street?

CATHARINE:
Running up and down hill . . .

DOCTOR:
You ran up and down hill?

CATHARINE:
No, no! Didn’t!—move either way!—at first, we were—
[During this recitation there are various sound effects. The percussive sounds described are very softly employed.]
I rarely made any suggestion but this time I did . . .

DOCTOR:
What did you suggest?

CATHARINE:
Cousin Sebastian seemed to be paralyzed near the entrance of the café, so I said, “Let’s go.” I remember that it was a very wide and steep white street, and I said, “Cousin Sebastian, down that way is the waterfront and we are more likely to find a taxi near there. . . . Or why don’t we go back in?—and have them call us a taxi! Oh, let’s do! Let’s do that, that’s better!” And he said, “Mad, are you mad? Go back in that filthy place? Never! That gang of kids shouted vile things about me to the waiters!” “Oh,” I said, “then let’s go down toward the docks, down there at the bottom of the hill, let’s not try to climb the hill in this dreadful heat.” And Cousin Sebastian shouted, “Please shut up, let me handle this situation, will you? I want to handle this thing.” And he started up the steep street with a hand stuck in his jacket where I knew he was having a pain in his chest from his palpitations. . . . But he walked faster and faster, in panic, but the faster he walked the louder and closer it got!

DOCTOR:
What got louder?

CATHARINE:
The music.

DOCTOR:
The music again.

CATHARINE:
The oompa-oompa of the—following band.—They’d somehow gotten through the barbed wire and out on the street, and they were following, following!—up the blazing white street. The band of naked children pursued us up the steep white street in the sun that was like a great white bone of a giant beast that had caught on fire in the sky!—Sebastian started to run and they all screamed at once and seemed to fly in the air, they outran him so quickly. I screamed. I heard Sebastian scream, he screamed just once before this flock of black plucked little birds that pursued him and overtook him halfway up the white hill.

DOCTOR:
And you, Miss Catharine, what did you do, then?

CATHARINE:
Ran!
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DOCTOR:
Ran where?

CATHARINE:
Down! Oh, I ran down, the easier direction to run was down, down, down, down!—The hot, white, blazing street, screaming out “Help” all the way, till—

DOCTOR:
What?

CATHARINE:
—Waiters, police, and others—ran out of buildings and rushed back up the hill with me. When we got back to where my Cousin Sebastian had disappeared in the flock of featherless little black sparrows, he—he was lying naked as they had been naked against a white wall, and this you won’t believe, nobody has believed it, nobody could believe it, nobody, nobody on earth could possibly believe it, and I don’t blame them!—They had devoured parts of him.

[Mrs. Venable cries out softly.]

Torn or cut parts of him away with their hands or knives or maybe those jagged tin cans they made music with, they had torn bits of him away and stuffed them into those gobbling fierce little empty black mouths of theirs. There wasn’t a sound any more, there was nothing to see but Sebastian, what was left of him, that looked like a big white-paper-wrapped bunch of red roses had been torn, thrown, crushed!—against that blazing white wall. . . .

[Mrs. Venable springs with amazing power from her wheelchair, stumbles erratically but swiftly toward the girl and tries to strike her with her cane. The Doctor snatches it from her and catches her as she is about to fall. She gasps hoarsely several times as he leads her toward the exit.]

MRS. VENABLE [offstage]:
Lion’s View! State asylum, cut this hideous story out of her brain!

[Mrs. Holly sobs and crosses to George, who turns away from her, saying:]

GEORGE:
Mom, I’ll quit school, I’ll get a job, I’ll—

MRS. HOLLY:
Hush son! Doctor, can’t you say something?

[Pause. The Doctor comes downstage. Catharine wanders out into the garden followed by the Sister.]

DOCTOR [after a while, reflectively, into space]:
I think we ought at least to consider the possibility that the girl’s story could be true. . . .