The Night of the Iguana

By Anthony Veiller
Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart... 
...be always acceptable in thy sight. 
O Lord, my strength... 
...and my redeemer. 
The sermon for today... 
...is taken from Proverbs. 
Chapter 25... 
...verse 28. 
"He that hath no rule over his own spirit... 
...is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

And I wonder as we examine our hearts together in this place set aside for worship... 
...how many of us here can say, 
"I rule my own spirit."

For how weak is man. 
How often do we... 
How often... 
How often do we stray from the straight and narrow. 
For only when we abide in the Lord are we like cities without walls. 
Only then can we defend ourselves against Satan and his temptations. 
We cannot rule ourselves alone. 
God only is our... Is our... 
God only is our help. 
And our salvation. 
All right! You know! 
That's why you're here! 
To see this city with its broken walls! 
"Whenever two or three are gathered in my name"... 
...is what scripture says. 
That's not why you're here. 
Let's change the words. Let's rewrite the order of the Morning Prayer. 
Whenever two or three or 2O or 3O or 2OO or 3OO... 
...are gathered together to make whispered comment... 
...to sit in judgment upon the condition of a... Of a what?
Yes, of a man of God.
I said, man of God, and I mean it!
Just what you all know, that your pastor,
your spiritual shepherd is...
Is the descendant of a clergyman,
the grandson of two bishops.
But there were collateral branches to the
family that went forth to brave dangers...
...and who were scalped.
Men with men's hearts,
the wild and free hearts of men!
They knew hunger
and they fed their appetites.
They fed their appetites.
Appetites that I have inherited.
I defy you! Shannon defies you!
Get out your tomahawks!
Get out your scalping knives!
Sharpen your scalping knives! Scalp me!
I will not and cannot continue to conduct
services in praise and worship of this...
...angry, petulant old man
in whom you believe.
You've turned your backs on the God
of love and compassion...
...and invented for yourself
this cruel, senile delinquent...
...who blames the world and all that
he created for his own faults.
Close your windows! Close your doors!
Close your hearts
against the truth about God!
Hello there.
- Where are they?
- Still inside the church.
I'm sick of dark old churches.
I like sunshine.
I'm sorry. I keep forgetting what
you were. I mean, what you are.
What?
Lovely, isn't it?
- Yeah.
- What do you call it again?
"Cup of gold."
Could you drink from it, really?
Champagne for two in copa de oro.
  - Dr. Shannon.
  - Miss Fellowes. Here you are, Miss Peebles.
The same brand even.
Fix you up in no time.
  - Oh, I am grateful. How much do I owe you?
  - Six pesos-fifty.
But it was only six pesos
in Ciudad Jurez.
  - I have it written down right here.
  - It doesn't matter, Judith, really, it doesn't.
Ciudad Jurez is 1200 miles behind us,
Miss Fellowes.
I thought it was too far to go
to save 4 cents.
  - Are we downhearted?
  - No.
Fantastic!
Did you see that?
Look. There's another.
What have those boys got, Dr. Shannon?
Iguanas. Giant lizards native
to this part of Mexico.
It is alleged they taste like chicken.
You mean they really
eat those awful-looking creatures?
  - Hank, stop on the bridge.
  - Stop?
Yeah, on the bridge.
What are we stopping for?
A moment of beauty, Miss Fellowes.
A fleeting glimpse
into the lost world...
...of innocence.
Look, Reverend,
we're behind schedule now.
Drive on, driver.
Okay.
My brother in Abilene,
that's Clarence Throxton...
...has a chain of 23 laundromats.
He says all he wants
on his tombstone is:
"He liberated the women of Texas from the bondage of wash day."
Aren't they unbelievable?
Squawk, squawk, squawk, ever since we started.
If they want all the comforts of home, then why don't they stay at home?
My goodness, this has been a rich experience.
It sure has.
Everything's gone wrong from the first day.
Every calamity in the book.
The whole trip has been hoodooed.
You better get back, Miss Goodall, where you belong.
You said it was going to be Charlotte.
All right. Charlotte.
- And I can't go on calling you Dr. Shannon.
- Just "Shannon" will be fine.
Couldn't it be Larry, if you're gonna call me Charlotte?
Honey, have a heart.
I have, Larry. I've just discovered.
Now you change places with me, Charlotte, dear.
I want to talk to Dr. Shannon about our itinerary.
I'll see you later, Larry.
I assume you know that Charlotte is underaged, Dr. Shannon?
What's that got to do with our itinerary?
If you know what's good for you, leave her alone.
Miss Fellowes, are you aware you are speaking to an ordained clergyman?
Stop leading her on.
I don't know what happened back in Tierra Caliente and I don't want to know.
Because if I did know, I'd have to take steps.
Don't make me take steps, Dr. Shannon.
Now, nothing happened
back in Tierra Caliente.
The room clerk got our keys mixed up,
that's all. A mistake, pure and simple.
Whatever suspicions you may be harboring
are quite groundless.
I can assure you of that.
Just leave her alone.
Don't make me take steps.
All right, girls, ready for another song?
These pills aren't doing anything for me.
Not anything!
- Puncture.
- Blowout.
Burned-out brake linings.
Broken fan belt, three flat tires.
These are the unavoidable mishaps
of any trip, Miss Fellowes.
Won't take more than a few moments
to change wheels.
Says you, reverend.
We're fresh out of wheels to change.
We gotta get that tire off and put on
a patch. Take maybe half an hour.
You take care of it for me, Hank.
Judith!
- I need you!
- Oh, all right, Peebie.
It's lovely, isn't it?
Yeah.
Are you really a man of the cloth, Larry?
- Who says I'm not?
- No one. I just wondered.
How can you ask such a question?
Doesn't Blake's Tours advertise tours
personally conducted by the...
...Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon?
Could they make such a claim
without justification?
I'm so glad you are.
What do you mean by that?
Well, it's such a noble life.
I mean, being interested in people's souls
and all that.
You can bring so much to people.
Someone like me even.
I can talk to you.
Like, I'd never dream of going swimming
with Reverend Hotchkiss back home.
I mean, he's old.
Now, lie down on the back seat, Peebie.
Put your feet up.
- Driver, have you seen Miss Goodall?
- Yeah, I've seen her.
Well? Well, where is she?
He's got her. Out there.
Charlotte.
Charlotte.
Charlotte.
- There was this boy back home.
- Charlotte.
He thought he was in love with me.
- Really, he made life just impossible.
- Charlotte.
So Daddy fixed it for me to take a trip.
Naturally, he wanted me to be
chaperoned in a strange country.
- Charlotte!
- Life's so odd.
- Yeah.
- If it hadn't been for that silly boy...
...I might never have met you.
- Charlotte!
- Take my hand, Larry.
What for?
So we don't drift apart.
Charlotte, I command you
to come back here.
Charlotte Goodall.
You only got to come on this trip
because of me!
Charlotte. Charlotte, you hear me?
Charlotte, I know you can hear me.
You are deliberately defying me.
Charlotte!
Charlotte! You stay away from that man!
You hear?
Charlotte, your mother put you
in my charge. 
I am responsible. Charlotte!
You only got to come on this trip because of me!
Charlotte! 
Why, Miss Fellowes. 
Dreadful girl. 
Defied me. 
You deliberately defied me! 
What did you think we were doing out there, Miss Fellowes? Spawning?
Oh, you beast! You beast! 
You beast. 
Hey! Hey, what are you doing? 
You... You get out of here! 
- My God, it's 3:00 in the morning. 
- I've got to see you. 
- It's important. My whole life's at stake. 
- Oh, well, my job's at stake. 
You don't have to worry about this measly old job. 
My goodness. Back home, my daddy's got three Ford agencies. 
At the moment, I don't see a Ford in my future. 
Have you been drinking, Larry? 
Honey girl, if I'd been drinking, I wouldn't be here. I'd still be drinking. Then what's wrong? 
Why are you all hot and sweaty? 
You won't misunderstand me, I mean, my being here in your room. 
Promise me you won't think... 
That boy back home told me that I had skin that no girl had any right to. 
Said it should be licensed to have skin as soft as mine is. 
- Wasn't it silly of him? 
- No. 
Yes. I mean, no, no. 
No, it should be licensed. 
I mean, at least until you're... 
Until you're old enough... ...for a driver's license. Now, you get out
of my room. You get off my bed.
I'll... I'll keep my eyes
shut until you've gone out of my room.
- Have I grown up too early, Larry?
- Yes. No, I mean... Yes, yes.
O Lord, lead me not into temptation.
And now, go on home.
I'll find my way all by myself.
- That's what I came to tell you.
- What?
I'm going home.
Tomorrow, from Puerto Vallarta.
I'm catching the plane at Puerto Vallarta.
I'll slip away from that possessive old bitch
while she's having her siesta...
...and be gone before she knows it.
You mustn't tell her where I've gone.
Let her sweat it a little.
Let her think
I've just disappeared into the jungle.
But I couldn't let you worry.
I had to say goodbye to you...
...or rather, au revoir.
Because when you bring them back...
...I'll be there waiting for you...
...copa de oro in my hair,
just over the border.
Honey, the border I'm crossing over
is the border of sanity, honey.
- No.
- Oh, honey, yes.
I've got it figured out, darling.
What you should have is a nice big church
in Thunderbird Heights...
Daddy's a big wheel there.
- and a wife who understands
the nobility of your mission.
- No, no.
- Yes, not no. I'll fix it. Daddy will fix it.
- No.
- Yes.
"He that hath no rule
over his own spirit is like a...
...city that has broken down
and without walls."
I'll rule your spirit.
I'll hold you.
- No. No, no. No.
- Yes. Yes, yes.
Charlotte.
Charlotte...
...I've told you how sorry I am.
You can afford to be generous.
I was just beside myself with anger.
But I never meant to harm you.
I wouldn't harm you for all the world.
Charlotte.
Charlotte, you've got to forgive me.
I can't stand being so unhappy.
Shannon?
Shannon, open the door.
You hear me, Shannon.
You've got that child in there.
Open up right now.
I've had it. She'll tell my father,
she'll tell everybody.
He's got her in there with him.
The door's locked.
Nobody's mixed any keys up this time.
I won't have it. I just won't have it.
You're through, Shannon.
And I'll see to that.
When I finish with you,
there won't be any place left to hide.
It's all right, Miss Fellowes.
Virtue is triumphant. Yours, of course.
Wait. Just you wait.
Good morning. We have a wonderful
trip ahead of us.
Some of the most beautiful
scenery in this part of Mexico.
I took the liberty of getting souvenirs
of our stay in Los Feliz.
I love you.
No charge. Compliments of the
Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon.
Miss Peebles.
Where's Miss Fellowes?
You think you could pull a stunt like last night and get away with it?
- What do you mean?
- I mean, it's in the fan.
This morning, she had a wire all written out...
...to some Judge Fellowes back in Texas.
She wants your life story from the first time you said "Mama."
- How do you know that?
- She asked me to send it, that's how.
I told her that was no part of no driver's job.
- Good man, Hank.
- You ain't off the hook.
Miss Fellowes went over to Telegfico herself.
She aims to have your hide, Reverend.
Good morning, Miss Fellowes.
I'll... I'll drive.
We're there, Peebie, your troubles are over.
Now you can have a nice bath.
"The Ambos Mundos Hotel in Puerto Vallarta...
...is a completely modern, air-conditioned hotel...
...on a delightful plaza, with excellent food and service."
Shannon? Shannon, that's our hotel.
Shannon. Stop.
Stop this instant.
Shannon. Shannon!
What the hell you trying to do, Reverend?
Get us all killed?
- You gone crazy or something?
- This is not the Ambos Mundos.
It says in the brochure we stop in Ambos Mundos, in the heart of Puerto Vallarta.
Here we are, ladies, this is Mismaloya, the garden spot of the West Coast.
You'll be grateful to me to your dying days.
In all of Mexico, there's nothing to equal this.
The chef is a Chinese, specially
imported from Shanghai by me.
Just leave your bags.
The staff will take care of everything.
Take us right back
to Puerto Vallarta where we belong.
I'm expecting an important telegram.
- I can't take you no place.
- Why not?
Because Reverend's taken the
distributor head, that's why not.
Shannon.
Shannon, you won't get away with this!
Fred?
Fred?
Shannon.
What the hell are you doing
down here out of season?
Would you have one of your boys
lug this bag up for me?
Pepe.
Fred, where are you?
Fred can't hear you, baby.
Why? Gone fishing?
How long have you been off it?
- Off what?
- The wagon.
I'm not drunk.
- Oh, what's the matter with you then?
- Fever, just fever.
- Where's Fred?
- Dead.
- Did you say dead?
- That's what I said. Fred's dead.
How? When?
Oh, less than four weeks ago.
Died with his boots on, though. Hooked
into a big marlin, the marlin won.
I was counting on Fred to bail me out,
straighten me out and bail me out.
He was my hope of salvation.
I had all my chips on Fred.
- Baby, you're going to pieces, aren't you?
- Yeah, yeah. They...
They are tearing me to pieces.
I was hanging on until I could get to the hammock on the veranda...
...over the rainforest and still-water beach. It's all that can pull me through.
Honey, just lie down the hammock.
I'll fix you a nice rum-coco.
No, no, no. If I start drinking rum-cocos now, I'll never stop.
Reverend!
They want us to go back into town.
Well, tell them they can't go back into town.
I thought Fred could tame them.
He was a fisherman, and I've got a busload of man-eating sharks.
- I've gotta get those women up here.
- No, you don't.
We're closed in August.
We're always closed in August.
Quit blowing, and blow!
Maxine. Maxine, you gotta help me.
- Honey, you're really gone.
- Maxine, I can't lose this party.
Blake's Tours have put me on probation because I had a bad party last month.
They tried to get me fired, so now I'm on probation.
If I lose this party, I'll be fired for sure.
And what's next, Maxine?
There's nothing, nothing lower than Blake's Tours.
Okay, okay, baby.
If it's that important to you...
...they can stay here.
Here comes your sidekick now.
His name's Hank. Hank.
- You gotta help me with him.
- Sure.
- I'll give him complimentary rum-coco.
- No, no, no.
Not until he's got the bus unloaded.
You ain't getting away with it.
Some of the ladies are in bad shape.
They'll walk back if you don't give me
that distributor head. They'll drop like flies from sunstroke
in this heat. Hank, I need your cooperation.
This is a test of strength, Hank,
between two men and a crate of wet hens.
You know that, don't you?
I know what I'm doing, Hank.
Don't you forget that.
Now, the bell cow sent a telegram from
Los Feliz this morning, right?
That answer will come to their hotel
in Puerto Vallarta, right?
But if we're not there,
no answer can be delivered, right?
Lizzie Borden won't get to wield her ax.
That's why I brought them up here. Working
every minute. Now, all I need is a little time.
To reestablish myself in the esteem...
...of those old...
The good ladies of our party.
By this time tomorrow, they'll
be eating out of the palm of my hand.
Of that, you have the assurance
of the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon.
What assurance you give
the kid you been leading on?
Leading on? Hank, if you are
to succeed in this business...
...you must give factual reports without
exaggeration. That's a definite exaggeration.
I've exercised every ingenuity
of which a man is capable...
...to keep at bay the advances
of this precocious jezebel.
That's a hell of a way to talk about
an innocent young girl.
You sure weren't doing no avoiding
when you got her up in your pad last night.
Ha-ha, very funny.
Without no exaggeration,
whatever happens to Reverend ain't enough.
Avoiding her? She laid it
on the line down there...
...why you shanghaied us up here.
- Hank...
I heard your story.
But that ain't her story.
She said that she planned
to take the plane from Puerto Vallarta...
...and you couldn't stand for it
to see her go.
Fantastic. That's fantastic.
Mrs. Faulk, honey...
...give him a menu. Give him one of your
sample menus to show the ladies.
One of your fantastic sample menus.
There you are, thank you.
There you are, Hank.
Now you go back down there and show
this fantastic sample menu to the ladies.
Describe the view from the hill,
the palatial appointments of the hotel...
...anything you like.
You get them up here, Hank.
A fine, upstanding young man.
So you appropriated the young chick
and the old hens are squawking, huh?
It's very serious. The child
is emotionally precocious.
- Bully for her.
- Also, she is traveling under the wing...
...of a military escort
of a butch vocal teacher.
I wonder how long it takes to sweat
the faculty of a Baptist Female College...
...out of a bus that's parked in the sun
when it's a 100 degrees in the shade.
- Well, they're staggering out of it now.
- They are?
I've won this round, I reckon.
Good old Hank.
Good old Hank better take cover.
Look at her, charging like
a bull elephant on a rampage.
Maxine, you gotta
help me with her, honey.
She's not only trying to get me fired,
she's also trying to pin on me...
...a rape charge,
a charge of statutory rape.
Statutory rape?
I've never known what that was.
That's when a man's seduced by a girl
under 20. That's not funny, Maxine.
Why do you always want
the young ones, honey?
I don't want any,
any, regardless of age.
Why do you take them, Shannon?
Huh, Shannon?
- Well, people need human contact, Maxine.
- Shannon!
Shannon! You're a fake.
Come on up, Miss Fellowes.
Everything's fixed.
Never do that, Miss Fellowes.
Not at high noon in a tropical country
in summer. Never charge uphill...
...like you're leading a troop of cavalry
attacking an impregnable position.
I don't want advice or instructions.
I want that distributor head.
This is one of the charming ladies of whom
I was speaking. Mrs. Faulk, Miss Fellowes.
- Hello.
- Is this man making a deal with you?
- What sort of deal?
- Is this man getting a kickback from you?
Look, honey,
obody gets a kickback out of me.
- I turn away more people...
- Have you got a telephone?
- Sure.
- I wanna make a call to Texas.
- Collect, of course.
- Right in the office there.
When the hell did you get
a telephone in here?
Old Fred, he finally got the telephone
company to run a wire up here.
Well, you get in there,
and find out who she's talking to.
And don't let her get through to
Blake's Tours. She's trying to get me fired.
We're almost there, Peebie.
Just a little further.
Miss Peebles, I am delighted.
I knew common sense would prevail.
You'll be enchanted with Mismaloya.
Look at this view.
We're not here out of choice,
we're here out of necessity.
- Miss Peebles is ill. She requires a...
- A bathroom.
A bathroom, a bathroom.
Hank, get the luggage out of the bus.
Help yourselves, ladies.
Bungalows are all yours.
Here you are, Miss Peebles,
to comfort and privacy.
- Peebie,
- We couldn't help it, Judith, Peebie...
Just a temporary indisposition.
Mrs. Faulk is looking after her personally.
That's the service you get here.
Now you and Charlotte,
Miss Goodall, can share this one.
I want a room of my own.
That's perfectly all right with me.
She can have a room of her own.
I no longer assume any responsibility
for her actions. She's a free agent.
Until we get back to civilization.
Hank.
Let me have Miss Fellowes' bag.
Thank you.
This way, Miss Fellowes.
Miss Fellowes, did you get
your call through?
Circuits were busy,
they'll call me back.
Miss Fellowes, please,
please give me a minute.
Well? Well, what is it?
Well, it's just that like...
Like everybody else
at some time or other in life...
...my life has cracked up on me.
How does that compensate us?
Miss Fellowes, I've just confessed
to you that I'm at the end of my rope.
Please, Miss Fellowes, don't make me
feel that any human being...
...would put personal compensation
before the ugly bare fact...
...of a man who's at the end of his rope,
but who still has to try to go on.
Now you listen to me.
We girls have worked and slaved...
...all year at Baptist Female College for
this Mexican tour, and the tour is a cheat.
Fantastic.
For days we've been holed
in that stifling bus...
...over the byways, off the highways.
Shook up and bumped up
so you could get your rake off.
All of the girls in this party
have dysentery.
That you cannot blame me for.
I passed out mimeographed instructions:
What to eat, what not to eat,
what to drink, what not to drink.
It's not what, but where
we ate that gave us dysentery.
It's not dysentery, not
even amoebic. It's nothing...
It's Montezuma's revenge.
That's what we call it down here:
Aztec two-step.
Do you? Well, I intend to have
my revenge, Dr. Shannon.
Honey, I don't think even old Fred
could have calmed her down.
You go lie down.
- Okay, Shannon.
- What you gonna do?
Did you ever have a shave
by a lady barber?
I can shave myself, Maxine.
With those shakes?
How long you had them, Shannon?
They've been incubating ever since the trip started. It's been a nightmare all the way.
Culminating with the Witch of Endor threatening to hound me to the grave.
That's when blind panic took over.
That's when the spook moved in.
Is that all your spook is, honey?
Just panic?
Maxine, don't say "just panic" like you'd say "just leprosy."
Panic's serious.
Who'd Madame Lafarge put that phone call to?
- Some judge in Corpus Christi.
- I knew it.
- Where you going?
- To tear that phone out...
In a pig's eye!
That phone cost me 1200 pesos to get in here.
You just lie back, baby, and when I get you all prettied up...
...I'll go and cancel that call.
I see you got your gold cross on.
Thinking about going back to the church?
I wrote my old bishop last night, a letter of complete capitulation.
How come you don't quit kidding yourself?
You ain't thinking about going back to no church...
...or you wouldn't be so scared of losing this cotton-picking job of yours.
You know, folks don't go to church to hear atheistical sermons being preached.
Damn it to hell. I never preached an atheist sermon in church in all my life.
All right, baby, all right.
What size shoe you wear, baby?
I do not get the point of that question.
Well, these shoes look shot to me.
If I remember correctly
you only travel with one pair.
Now, old Fred's estate includes
one good pair of shoes.
And your feet look about the same size.
I loved old Fred, Maxine,
but I do not want to fill his shoes.
You could do worse, baby.
You could do worse.
Which way is the sea?
It's right down there, but we can't see it
because of the trees.
I can feel it and smell it.
It's the cradle of life.
Are these two with your party?
They look like a couple of loonies.
Life began in the sea.
Oh! Oh, how do you do?
Hello.

Have you ever tried helping a gentleman...
...who can't walk,
uphill through a rain forest?
No. I wouldn't even try it downhill.
Anything I can do for you folks?
Well, now that we've made it,
I don't regret the effort.
What a view for a painter!
They told me in the town
this was the ideal place for a painter.
And they weren't exaggerating.
Anything I can do for you?
Yes, yes, I'm looking for
the manager of the hotel.
Oh, that's me. Speaking.
You're the manager. Oh, good.
I'm Hannah Jelkes. How do you do?
- Mrs...?
- Faulk. Maxine Faulk.
You're looking for rooms?
Yes, yes, we are, but we've come
without reservations.
Well, honey, we're closed in August,
except for a few special guests.
Well, look at them.
If they're not special, who the hell is?
Honey, that old man ought to be in a hospital.
No. Oh, no, no, he just sprained his ankle a little this morning.
Come on, Grandpa. Two steps, one, two. There you are.
Hannah, tell the lady that my frailty is temporary. I will soon be able to crawl and then to toddle.
And before long I'll be leaping around here like an old mountain goat.
Yes, yes, Grandfather, I explained that. Tell the lady that I know some hotels don't want to take dogs, cats or monkeys. And some don't even solicit the patronage of infants in their late 90s.
But assure her...
...that if she'll forgive my disgraceful longevity...
...and this temporary decrepitude...
...I will present her with the last signed copy of my first volume of verse. Published in... When, Hannah? The day that President William McKinley was assassinated, Nonno.
My grandfather is the poet Jonathan Coffin. He is 97 years young. And he will be 98 years young... ...on the 5th of October.
- Old folks are remarkable.
Hey, the phone!
Did you cancel that call?
When the hell did I have time?
Did I talk too much?
Have I been talking too much again?
I'm afraid that he has. I don't think she's going to take us. Her eyes said "no" in big blue capital letters. Oh, I shouldn't worry about that. She'll take you in, all right.
The Judge Truman Fellowes
on the telephone.
Must be old butch's brother.
Wouldn't have a husband.
Anyway, I said she'd checked out, canceled the call.
Maxine, you're larger than life.
Shall we register now?
You can register any time you want.
But I gotta collect 6 dollars from you right now...
...if you want your name in the pot.
Six dollars.
Three dollars each.
You see, out of season like this...
...we operate on the modified American plan.
Oh, I see. Yes, well...
...we usually operate on a special basis ourselves.
What do you mean, operate?
Here is our card.
I think you may have heard of us.
We've had quite a few write-ups.
My grandfather is the oldest living and practicing poet.
And he gives recitations.
I paint watercolors and I'm a quick sketch artist.
We travel together and we pay our way as we go...
...by my grandfather's recitations...
...and by the sale of quick character sketches in charcoal and pastel.
I usually pass among the tables during lunch and dinner, slowly.
I wear an artist's smock... picturesquely dabbed with paint.
I don't push myself on people. I just display my work.
And I smile sweetly at them, and if invited to do so...
...I sit down and make a quick character sketch.
And Gramps?
I introduce him as the world's oldest living and practicing poet.
If invited, he gives a recitation of one of his poems.
Of course, they were all written a very long time ago...
...but do you know he has started a new poem?
For the first time in 20 years he has started another poem.
Hasn't finished it yet.
He still has his inspiration but his power of concentration has weakened a little.
Right now, Gramps ain't concentrating at all.
He's just catching forty winks.
Gramps.
Gramps.
Time to hit the sack, Gramps.
- Now, you just wait a minute.
- Please.
We've tried every hotel in Puerto Vallarta.
They wouldn't take us.
I'm afraid I have to place myself at your mercy.
Okay. Looks like you're in for one night, but just one.
- Thank you.
- Where's your luggage?
No luggage?
I hid it behind some palmettos at the foot of the path with Grandfather's wheelchair.
Pepe.
They're chasing an iguana.
What will they do with it?
Tie him up, fatten him up and eat him up.
Pepe.
Okay, honey. You and Gramps can have bungalow nine.
How's Gramps gonna get meals?
Let them have that suite.
Wait a minute, Shannon, 
that's the deluxe suite.
I know, Maxine, generosity 
is the cornerstone of your nature.
Come on, Gramps.
Time to move.
That's it.
Did someone call for a recitation? 
No, Nonno, 
we're just going to our rooms.
I'm dreadfully afraid 
my grandfather had a slight stroke... 
...in those high passes 
through the Sierras.
Old people have them. They're not regular 
strokes, just little cerebral incidents.
Symptoms clear up so quickly, sometimes 
old people don't realize they've had them.
Just rest for a few moments, Nonno.
How calmly does the olive branch 
Observe the sky begin to blanch 
Without a cry, without a prayer 
With no betrayal of despair 
I'll leave Nonno in here 
and I'll take that room.
That's the one with the leaky roof, 
but you won't find out about it... 
...until it rains, and then it'll be too late 
to do anything except swim out if it.
- Oh, no, Mr...?
- Shannon, the Reverend T. Lawrence.
Mr. Shannon, 
I'll find a dry spot if it rains.
How many...? 
How many times have you 
been around the world?
As many times as the world 
has been around the sun.
And I feel as if I've gone 
the whole way on foot.
Thank you, Mr. Shannon.
Operator. 
Operator, aqu parlar English?
- S, seora. Can I help you?
- This is Miss Fellowes at Mismaloya.
- S, seora.
- What happened to my call to Texas?
- Where in Texas?
- Corpus Christi.
- I thought you'd checked out.
- Checked out?
How could I check out?
He's got the distributor...
Operator, you put that
call through again...
...and I will hold the line
and wait if it takes all afternoon.
Very well, seora.
Seducer.
- What?
- Seducer.
- Now, what's the squawk now?
- Oh, Larry, why didn't you tell me?
Tell you what? What is this?
- You've been exposed, Shannon.
- Your whole shameful past.
Posing as a minister of the gospel.
I am a minister. Anybody who says I'm not...
Honey, show them that gold cross,
that'll prove it.
You thought you outwitted me, didn't you,
having your paramour here cancel my call.
Miss Fellowes, honey,
if paramour means what I think it does...
...you're gambling with your front teeth.
My brother has been in communication
with Blake's Tours.
They've assured him
that they will take action, drastic action.
Just what do you mean by that?
- I have a contract that provides...
- Your contract is worthless.
My brother is a judge.
And he has informed your employer
that they are not required to employ...
...a man who makes a career
of seducing young girls.
"Seducing!"
Did you lead her to infer that...
Larry, how could you think that 1...
I said a career. All the way
from Pleasant Valley, Virginia...
...to that dreadful hotel
that you tricked us into last night.
But that career is now ended.
The Reverend Shannon, defrocked.
That's a lie. A base lie.
I was never defrocked.
I was only locked out of my church.
Spreading a story like that is libel.
I could take legal action. And I will.
These ladies are my witnesses.
Repeating a story like that will get you...
I'll show you. I'll show you all.
You can't say that I was defrocked.
I'll show you. I'll show you.
Well, if you're not gonna eat him,
I guess I'd better see about some food.
What's this mess supposed to be?
Soup.
Well, it's burnt!
Chang...
...I've warned you before.
I don't allow this stuff on premises,
even if you're on vacation.
You remember the time you got it
in the enchiladas?
What are you
gonna do with them dogfish?
Me do nothing. Me on vacation.
Pedro can fry with plenty chili,
make hot.
- Why not steam it, Mrs. Faulk?
- No guests allowed in the kitchen.
Mayn't I help?
Please let me.
I was born and bred in the fishing port
of Nantucket.
And I've cooked every kind of fish
that swims in the sea.
Except whales, but they're mammals.
I know what you're up to, honey.
You wanna make yourself useful so I'll let you and old Gramps stay here free. I wouldn't do anything so obvious. Not with a woman of your practicality. No, my wanting to help in the kitchen... May I have the knife, please?
Machete.
It's just that I've noticed a certain... animosity towards Mr. Shannon among the... ladies in his party, particularly in the case of... Miss Fellowes, and I think with a soothing meal inside her... it might soothe her spirit. Miss Jelkes, honey, you're a hustler. A fantastic, cool hustler. You're completely broke, huh?
Yes, we are, completely. You say that like you're proud of it. I'm not proud of it, or ashamed of it either. It just happens to be what's happened to us. You know what that means? No, I don't think I do. It's Chinese for "No sweat."
Our Chinese cook says it. Old Fred used to say... that those three words summed up all the wisdom of the East.

- Fred?
- My husband.
My late husband. How lately did you lose him, Mrs. Faulk? Three, almost four weeks ago. Maybe it hasn't dawned on me yet, old Fred being gone for good. It seems like he's out fishing. He was always out fishing anyhow. He hardly ever opened his mouth, except when he got drunk and sang songs. He'd lie out in that hammock and drink and sing all night long.
No guest ever complained either.
Or I'd have shown them
the straight way down the hill.
I'm sure you would.
I loved old Fred.
More than anybody would guess, the way
I carried on. Except Fred, he knew.
You see, he was 28 years older than me.
And we hadn't slept together in
I don't know when.
Fred used to say...
...he guessed he was impotent. But if you
ask me, honey, he just plain lost interest.
What other interest did he have,
Mrs. Faulk?
Only fishing.
He'd catch them, throw them back in.
Unless they swallowed the hook,
we'd have them for supper.
Fred lived and let live.
When I hired them beach boys...
...Fred care?
Did he raise hell when I started going
night swimming with them? Hell, no.
He just went night fishing all night long.
He must have been a remarkable man.
You said it.
People with troubles, and that's everybody,
used to come and spill them to old Fred.
And he could listen forever.
He was better than any head shrinker...
...because he knew what was
bugging you even before you told him.
That's why Shannon always made for
Mismaloya when he was spooked.
I remember one time, he came down here
out of season like now.
And I went on the make for him.
But Shannon wasn't having any,
on account of his friendship with Fred.
Well, they're all ready for steaming.
So was I, Miss Jelkes, honey, so was I.
But I couldn't tell him
that Fred didn't give a damn.
It didn't seem fair to Fred.
You know I think you're quite a remarkable person too, Mrs. Faulk.
Don't you try to con me, honey.
I understand me.
I still got my biological urges.
The beach boys?
Yup.
But even I know the difference between loving somebody...
...and just going to bed with them.
Even I know that.
Nelly was a lady
Last night she died
Toll the bell
For lovely Nell
My dark Virginny bride
Don't you step in this room.
Don't step over that threshold.
Don't complicate my life. I've got a fever.
Don't complicate my fever.
Larry, watch out.
You're walking on broken glass.
- Never mind.
- Stand still.
You're cutting your feet,
leaving blood stains on the floor.
- Who saw you come in here?
- Nobody but an iguana.
- Your guardian angel will be in full cry.
- Let her howl.
I hate her and I hate that little snitch of a bitch that ruined you in Virginia.
You're ruining me in Mexico.
Get off your knees, it's indecent.
Sit down over there. I want to explain something to you. Look and listen.
A man has got just so much in his emotional bank balance.
But mine has run out.
It's stone dry.
I can't draw a check on it now.
There's nothing left to draw out.
Oh, Lord, you've got blood stains on it.
I'm sorry to tell you
that you're as dangerous...
...as you are young and lovely.
And it's your being young and lovely
that makes you so dangerous.
And that gives you this destructive
potential over a destructible man.
We're not going back.
We'll stay here together.
Live here, be beachcombers like
Fletcher Christian and that native girl.
Living in the sun.
You're going to marry me, Larry.
Oh, Lord, no, no.
And nothing could be worse
for a girl in your unstable condition...
...to be mixed up with a man
in my unstable condition.
Because two people
in unstable conditions...
...are like two countries
facing each other in unstable conditions.
The destructive potential could blow
the whole world to bits...
...past all repair.
You're walking barefoot on glass.
I would walk on brimstone through hell...
...to get you out of my room.
Now will you get out of my room.
I don't believe you don't love me.
I love...
I love nobody.
I know it's practically impossible
for anybody to realize they're not loved...
...when in love with somebody
they think they're in love with.
You couldn't walk barefoot on glass
if you didn't love me.
I'm walking barefoot on glass
because you won't leave me alone.
All right, I'll do it too. I'll walk on glass
and I'll bleed to death with you.
No, you won't do this. You will get
out of my room and out of my life.
No, put me down. No!
You will not come near me again,
understand?
Put me down. I hate you!
You've ruined my life.
You've killed me, killed me!
Put me down!
What is this, Mr. Shannon?
Hell and damnation.
Your feet are bleeding.
There's glass all over the floor
in my room.
Sit down. I have antiseptics
and surgical gauze in my room.
Fantastic. Absolutely fantastic.
That word "fantastic" seems to be
your favorite word, Mr. Shannon.
Miss Jelkes...
...we live on two levels.
Just two?
The fantastic level and the realistic level
are the two levels upon which we live.
But which is the real one really?
I would say both, Mr. Shannon.
But when you live
on the fantastic level...
...as I have more and more lately,
but have to operate on the realistic level...
...that's when you get spooked.
And I am spooked, Miss Jelkes.
A chronicle no longer gold
A bargaining with mist of gold
There.
Now I'll go and clear up
the broken glass in your room.
Don't bother about that. If you'd be
kind enough to bring my shoes...
...and could you let me have
my clerical collar? It's on the floor.
Are you planning to conduct a church
service here tonight, Mr. Shannon?
No, I just plan to do...
...nothing.
Oh, and bring me that distributor head,
if you would.  
This?  
That's it.  
If you're not going to conduct a service,  
why get into this uncomfortable outfit?  
Because I've been accused of being  
defrocked and lying about it, that's why.  
I will demonstrate to these ladies that  
I'm still a frocked minister of the gospel.  
I'm afraid it's no use, Mr. Shannon.  
The neckband's so frayed,  
it won't hold the collar button.  
- Oh, damn.  
- Hannah!  
Oh, God, he's fallen.  
Hey, Grandpa.  
There you are.  
I wish my pulse were as steady as his.  
Did you feel dizzy, Grandfather?  
No, no.  
I was working on my new poem and...  
Where's my cane?  
There you are, Grandpa.  
I was beating time with my cane  
and my cane slipped.  
You'd better rest a while.  
Yes.  
Rest a while.  
He'll be all right now,  
we can talk outside.  
Why are you breathing like that?  
Some people take a drink...  
...others take a pill.  
I just take a few deep breaths.  
Well...  
...don't be frightened about it.  
He was amazing, just amazing...  
...until he started having these little,  
whatever they are, these spells.  
When they started, I...  
...tried to persuade him to go back to  
Nantucket but he said, "No. Mexico."  
So Mexico it is.  
And he wouldn't rest anywhere,
until he got to the sea.
"The cradle of life," as he calls it.
So here we are, Mr. Shannon.
Like a couple of scarecrows
on this windy hilltop...
...over the cradle of life.
The plummeting to earth and then...
Hannah? Hannah?
- Yes, Grandfather?
- I'm pretty sure I'm gonna finish it here.
I have the same feeling myself,
Grandpa.
I've never been surer of anything
in my life.
I've never been surer of anything
in mine, either.
Of course, you'll finish the poem.
Why, it's nearly finished already.
I'll be outside if you want me
to write something down.
He'll probably sleep a while now.
Miss Jelkes, may I...
May I have one of your cigarettes?
You must never smoke those.
They're made out of cigarette ends
taken out of the gutters.
Have one of mine.
English, imported, in an airtight tin.
It's my one luxury in life.
Yes, thank you, I will,
since you've thrown mine away.
Well...
...I'm going to tell you something
about yourself, Miss Jelkes.
You are a lady,
a real one and a great one.
What have I done to merit
that compliment from you?
Well, you took out your cigarettes,
found out you only had two left.
You can't afford to buy another pack
of even that cheap brand...
...and so you put them away for later,
right?
Mercilessly accurate, Mr. Shannon.
But when I asked you for one, you gave
me it without slightest sign of reluctance.
I think you're making a big point
out of a small matter.
Oh, no, no.
I'm making a small point
out of a very, very large matter.
How long have you been inactive
in the church, Mr. Shannon?
What's that got to do
with the price of rice in China?
- Nothing.
- And what's it got to do...
...with the price of coffee in Brazil?
I retract the question, with apologies.
Very well, then,
I'll be glad to answer it. I...
I have been inactive
in the church for all but one year...
...since I was ordained
a minister of the church.
That's quite a sabbatical, Mr. Shannon.
Yes, I had one parish for one year
and then...
...I was not defrocked...
...I was locked out of the church.
Are you...? You drawing me?
I'm trying to.
Why did they lock you out?
For fornication and conduct
unbecoming a man of the cloth.
What were the circumstances
of the first offense?
Fornication?
A very young Sunday school teacher asked
to see me, privately, in my study and...
...well, she...
She declared herself
to me, wildly.
A declaration of love?
Don't make fun of me, Miss Jelkes.
I wasn't.
I was the damnestest prig
in those days that you can imagine.
I said to this girl, I said, "Let us kneel down and pray together."
And we did, we knelt.
And then all of sudden, the...
kneeling position turned
into a reclining position.
The next day, she cut herself with
her father's straight blade razor.
- Fatally?
- No, no, no.
Thanks to a Band-Aid.
But it made a scandal.
Yes, I imagine that it
caused some comment.
Yes, it did, it did that.
The next Sunday when I saw those smug,
accusing, disapproving faces uplifted...
...I had a sudden urge to shock.
And I shocked them.
I chased them out of the church.
And what was the upshot of it?
They put me in a nice little private
asylum to recover from...
am complete nervous breakdown.
That's the way they put it.
And then when I got out I...
I entered this line.
"Tours of God's world,
conducted by a minister of God."
To quote the pamphlet.
But on the side...
Shannon has been collecting evidence.
- Evidence of what?
- Man's inhumanity to God.
- What do you mean by that?
- The pain we cause him.
We've poisoned his atmosphere.
We've slaughtered
his creatures of the wild.
We've polluted his rivers.
We've even taken
God's noblest creation, man...
...and brainwashed him into becoming
our own product, not God's.
Hacked, stacked and canned.
Am I...?
Am I moving too much?
No, of course not.
Mr. Shannon?
What do you do if...?
If what?
If Miss Fellowes has her way?
And gets me fired?
Yes, what do you do then?
Well, I either go back
to the church, or I...
I take the long swim.
- It's right out there.
- What is?
China.
- Was that the luncheon gong?
- Chow will be ready in a half-hour.
How you feeling, Miss Peebles, honey?
A bit better?
- Thank you, I think I am.
- How about a little drink?
- That won't hurt you.
- Well...
You look like the den mother.
How about you, Miss Fellowes?
Thank you, we'll just sit here
and wait until lunch is ready.
Miss Fellowes, honey.
I know you got a beef or two.
But why don't you just relax
with a little complimentary rum-coco?
Save them for your friend, Mr. Shannon.
I don't imbibe.
Then how about a little pot?
I don't usually serve it to my guests...
...but you look like
you need something special.
May I see?
I'm just a quick sketch artist,
Mr. Shannon.
Not very talented.
Are my eyes as wild as this?
Yes, they are, Mr. Shannon.
I have fever.
- What gives with you two?
- What do you mean, what gives?
I mean, am I butting in here?
Is three a crowd?
No, indeed, not a bit.
What are you covering up there?
Let me see.
What are you drawing him for?
He's broker than you are.
Perhaps you'd like to keep it,
Mrs. Faulk.
Thanks a hell of a lot, honey,
but one of him is enough.
- Who wants a drink?
- Nothing for me, thank you.
Just as well. You're in to me
for the rooms and meals.
- A little whiskey makes no difference.
- Lay off.
And you go to hell, why don't you!
Mr. Shannon, Mrs. Faulk.
This is childish.
Stop it at once. It's disgraceful!
It's disgraceful.
- Mrs. Faulk, you must realize...
- I realize you're a deadbeat.
Using that dying old man as a front...
...to get you into places when you
ain't got cash for one day in advance.
You're dragging him around
like a Chinese beggar...
...dragging around crippled children
to put the touch on the tourists.
I shall go into town.
And I shall set up my easel in the plaza...
...and I shall peddle my watercolors,
and sketch tourists.
I am not a weak person, Mrs. Faulk.
My failure here is not typical of me.
- I'm not a weak person either, honey.
- Oh, no, indeed.
- Your strength is awe-inspiring.
- You bet your...
How you going into town,
when you ain't got cab fare?
I shall go on shanks' mare, Mrs. Faulk.
I'm Nantucket born and bred.
Islanders are good walkers.
I shall pack our things.
And I shall put my grandfather
into his wheelchair...
...and push him back down this hill
to the road, all the way into town.
He would prefer that
to staying where he is not wanted.
And I would prefer it for him
and for myself, Mrs. Faulk.
All right, calm down.
- I am perfectly calm, Mrs. Faulk.
- Well, I'm not.
That's the trouble.
The trouble is Shannon.
- I caught the vibrations between you two.
- Mrs. Faulk.
I'm a New England spinster
who is pushing 40.
Well, who the hell isn't?
I'm good at catching vibrations.
And there were vibrations between you,
mutual vibrations, the minute you got here.
And just that, believe me, is enough
to put me in a lather.
And don't ask me why.
Look at him.
Broke, spooked, as good as fired.
Those are only his circumstances,
Mrs. Faulk...
...not the man himself.
- Well, anyhow.
Forget what I said, honey.
I wasn't sore at you,
I was sore at Shannon.
And still the ripe fruit and the branch
- Observe the sky begin to blanch
- I'll fix old Gramps a toddy.
- Old folks need it, need a toddy.
- Without a cry...
That's very kind of you.
I'll make him a Manhattan
with two cherries in it.
So he'll live through lunch.
Charlotte.
- Charlotte!
- What's eating her now?
Charlotte. Girls! Charlotte!
What's the trouble now, Miss Fellowes?
Charlotte. Have you seen her?
She's disappeared.
Charlotte.
- Charlotte!
- Charlotte.
- Charlotte.
- Now be calm, Miss Fellowes.
Tell us quietly what has happened.
She didn't come to luncheon. Her room
was empty, and she's not in my room.
I don't know what's happened.
She doesn't answer.
- Let's find her. Charlotte.
- Charlotte.
Charlotte.
- More.
- No more.
No more, I say.
Stop it.
- Seorita, go home.
- I have no home.
Go home, I say.
Take your dollars with you.
I'm a rich man.
I do not want your dollars.
I do not want you dancing to my music.
- More music.
- No more music.
Seorita, we do not want our sons
to know that young girls can be like you.
I won't go back up there.
Put me down. Let me go!
Attaboy, Hank.
Give it to them!
Hit them.
Knock them down.
Attaboy, hit them.
Yeah, hit them again.
Yeah, give it to them, Hank.
Come on, hit them.
Come on, Hank.
Knock them down! Knock them out!
Yeah, come on, Hank, give it to them.
Come on, Hank!
Oh, Hank, you saved me.
You're so brave.
My hero. Oh, Hank, take me home.
I mean home.
I'll tell Daddy it was you who saved me.
Daddy, he loves me.
He'll do anything to thank you.
I wonder if any of you ladies
would be interested in seeing...
...some samples of my work?
This one is entitled:
Moonlight Recollected by Daylight.
And here, here is a character sketch
that I did in less than five minutes.
The queen, when she was Princess
Elizabeth, on a tour of Africa years ago.
I couldn't get very close, of course.
- I had to use field glasses.
- No, thank you.
Love's an old remembered song
A drunken fiddler plays
Stumbling crazily along
Crooked alleyways
- Not now, Nonno.
- When his heart is mad with music
- He will play the...
- Nonno, please.
He thinks that someone called
for a recitation of one of his poems.
Don't you worry, honey.
In this crowd,
old Gramps is the life of the party.
Gramps, honey, here.
Finish your toddy.
I don't care what anybody says.
This fish is delicious.
Swing it this way.
I could handle another helping.
And no funny stuff.
Keep those dukes on the platter.
What did he say?
He says you're a hell of a man
in action against a fish...
...if it's a dead fish.
Very funny.
Daddy always says the only difference
between a success and a failure...
...is that a success knows an opportunity
when he sees it, and a failure doesn't.
Well, don't worry about me
recognizing an opportunity.
Oh, Hank. When I tell Daddy,
he'll be so proud of you.
Hannah?
What was the take?
Grandfather, please stop shouting.
Did they cross your palm
with silver or paper, Hannah?
Nonno, no more shouting,
we're having lunch.
Chow time, Gramps.
How much did they come across with?
He won't stop shouting.
Gramps. Five dollars.
I'm putting it in your pocket.
We can't accept gratuities,
Mr. Shannon.
Oh, hell, it was only pesos.
Yeah, we're going to clean up
in this place.
You bet we're going
to clean up here, Gramps.
If there's a cocktail lounge,
we ought to work that first.
Strike while the iron is hot.
While it's hot.
Hello?
Hello?
Speaking.
Anything I can do for you?
Who?
Shannon.
You're wanted on the blower.
El Paso. Person-to-person.
This is the moment you've awaited,
Miss Fellowes.
That will be my esteemed,
but not by me, employer.
I will now demonstrate to you
how a man of integrity brings an almost...
...insoluble situation
to a triumphant conclusion.
The Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon
speaking.
Well, Mr. Blake, how are you?
Nice of you to call.
Wish you were down here with us.
The air's like spring wine down here...
...at this time of year.
What do you mean, on the sauce?
You know me better than that, Mr. Blake.
I don't care what any
judge in Corpus Christi says.
You know and I know that I am a
regularly ordained minister of the gospel.
- Shannon, you're fired as of right now.
- Now, wait a minute, you big fat zero.
Let me tell you something.
A tour conductor is like
the captain of a ship.
Once the bus leaves the terminal
he is in sole command.
And let me assure you...
...that Shannon runs a taut bus.
A very taut bus. I've taken it past...
...deadly shoals and all the perils
of the deep.
Figuratively speaking, of course.
And I remain in command.
I have here in my pocket
the symbol of my command.
Right here, in my pocket.
You cannot fire a man who has the distributor head.
Shannon can fire Blake's Tours...
...but Blake's Tours cannot fire Shannon.
- This tour will end in peace and unity.
- You're fired, Shannon!
Shannon will emerge triumphant.
Well, Hank, aren't you proud of me?
As a member of my crew...
...aren't you proud of me?
Hank, you know that... That shiner gives you character, Hank.
Hey, lay off, you big baboon.
I got it. I got it. I got it. I got it.
That's to show how I hate you.
I hate you.
Foe. I thought you were my friend and you turned out to be my foe. Foe.
You're all through, Reverend.
You've had it.
Relax, baby. The party's over.
Okay, folks, let's get cracking.
Get your duds together, we're ready to blow this goat shed.
- Goat shed?
- Come on, I'll help you get packed.
You got rooms in Puerto Vallarta.
I'll have you there in 20 minutes.
From now on, this tour is gonna be conducted like a respectable tour.
Respectable? Why these ladies have had, some of them...
...most of them, if not all of them, for the first time in their lives...
...contact, social contact, with a gentleman born and bred...
...whom under no other circumstances could they possibly have met.
The son of a clergyman and the grandson of two bishops.
Churchmen on both sides of the family.
- How's old Gramps doing?
- He's sleeping just now.
Through that riot?
Will Mr. Shannon be all right,
do you think?
All right? Honey, I don't know.
He cracks up like this so regular,
you can set a calendar by it.
About twice a year.
He's done it twice down here.
Fred used to say it had something to do
with the moon.
I sure wish old Fred was here right now.
Oh, my God!
- What is it, Mrs. Faulk?
- Honey, I advise you not to look.
Just take my word for it.
Old Shannon is out-Shannoning Shannon.
Shannon, you beast. You beast.
You, you... You unutterable beast!
Did you see what he did?
All right, ladies, now keep calm.
Keep calm, ladies. Just follow me.
Follow me down the hill.
Make sure you get my bag.
Shannon.
You've avenged yourself for
all time on Miss Fellowes' suitcase.
I've heard of a dog cocking his leg.
Why don't you buzz off
on your broomstick?
I'm not talking to you.
I'm talking to him.
I'm going to have you blacklisted
in every travel agency in America.
What about Africa, Tasmania,
Bechuanaland, Tonmawr?
Please, Miss Fellowes, leave him alone.
As soon as I get back, I'm gonna swear
out a warrant for your arrest.
Molesting a minor, kidnapping,
malicious damage to private property.
Indecent exposure.
What subject do you teach
back in that college of yours, honey?
- Voice, if that's got anything to do with it.
- Well, geography's my speciality.
Did you know that if it wasn't for
the dykes...
...the plains of Texas would be engulfed
by the Gulf?
Maxine.
Let's level a while, butch, old gal.
Do you know what you're sore about,
really sore about?
That little quail of yours
has a natural preference for men instead of...
Maxine!
What is she talking about?
You'd better go now, Miss Fellowes.
The party's over.
Right now, I'm no longer
in a position to...
...discharge my responsibility
of protecting you.
Responsibility from which
you discharged me.
Just go, Miss Fellowes.
Just go.
What did you shut me up for?
It's time somebody told that old dame off.
Miss Fellowes is a highly moral person.
And if she ever recognized the truth
about herself, it would destroy her.
Well, she's done a pretty good job
of destroying you.
Maxine.
Don't rob me of the credit
for my own small accomplishments.
Jehoshaphat, the bill!
They haven't paid the cotton-picking bill!
All right, ladies, take your seats,
we'll be out of here.
I don't know, I kind of hate to leave
this nice place.
Peebie.
- Charlotte, you get in next.
- Climb in, Miss Fellowes.
Charlotte's sitting up front with me.
Hey!
Just a flipping minute.
- What is it now?
- 300 pesos, that's what it is now.
- Twenty-four dollars.
- What about my suitcase?
Miss Fellowes, honey,
you ain't gonna blame that on me.
I blame your tout that brought us here. Collect the money from him.
Miss Fellowes, you've been doing a lot of complaining about the food on this trip.
You figure you're gonna do any better in a Mexican jail?
- Attagirl.
- One, two, three.
And watch out for the fleas at the Ambos Mundos.
All you have to do is sponge down with a little kerosene.
The manager keeps a big supply right in the lobby.
There go your ladies, Mr. Shannon.
The spook's triumphant.
He's won his point.
He's proved there's no place for Shannon...
...on the realistic level.
The last thin thread that bound him there...
...is broken.
Now, Lord...
...lettest thy servant...
...depart in peace.
Mr. Shannon, stop that.
You're cutting yourself doing that.
Here. Please. Let me help.
- Let me take it off.
- I've got to break the chain.
No, no, no. Now, wait. Wait.
There.
There, I have it.
Thank you.
It's yours. You keep it.
Where are you going?
The long swim. To China.
Mrs. Faulk, stop him.
Mrs. Faulk.
Mrs. Faulk, stop him.
You must stop him. Please stop him.
Knock him out if you have to.
Hang one on him.
Baby.
You've got the daddy of all spooks.
This is a blue plate special.
- Let me out of here!
- You lie doggone now. Quiet down.
You know and I know that half this show
you're putting on...
...is playacting. Only trouble is,
sharks don't know that.
Let me loose.
Honey, you scared me out of seven years'
growth tonight, you ain't gonna do it again.
Mrs. Faulk?
I wonder if you'd mind
making a pot of this tea?
Miss Jelkes, does this strike you
as the right time for a tea party?
But this isn't ordinary tea. It's poppy
seed tea. It has a very calming effect.
Let me go!
- Tea, it's a hell of a solution.
- Please believe me, Mrs. Faulk.
I've had experience of someone
in Mr. Shannon's condition.
And I do know whereof I speak.
Untie me!
Poppy seed makes a mild
sedative drink...
...that helps you get through nights
that are hard for you to get through.
We could all use some tonight.
Because for all of us...
...you, me, my grandfather...
...this won't be an easy night
to get through.
Without a cry, without a prayer
- With no betrayal of despair
- Untie me.
- Not yet.
- I'm panicking.
- I know.
- A man can die of panic.

Not when he enjoys it as much as you do, Mr. Shannon.

What do you mean by that insult?
You think I like being tied in this hammock, trussed up like a hog in a slaughterhouse?

No, who wouldn't like to atone for the sins of themselves...

...and the world if it could be done in a hammock with ropes...

...instead of on a cross with nails?

On a green hilltop...

...instead of on Golgotha, the place of the skulls.

Isn't that a comparatively comfortable...

...almost voluptuous crucifixion to suffer for the sins of the world, Mr. Shannon?

- Why have you turned against me?
- I haven't turned against you.

Thought you were sexless, but you've suddenly turned into a woman.

You know how I know that?
Because you, not me, are taking pleasure in my being tied up.
All women, whether they want to face it or not...

...want to see a man in a tied-up situation.
They spend their lives trying to get a man into a tied-up situation.
Their lives are fulfilled when they get as many men as they can...

...into a tied-up situation.
I'd like to untie you right now, but I can't.

You believe in people being tied up?
Only when they might take the long swim to China.
The long swim to China...
Shannon!
- Oh, yeah.
- Stop.
Stop it. Stop it, Shannon.
I'm gonna call Dr. Lopez.
And I'm gonna have you carted off
to the Casa de Locos.
- And you'll be put in a cell, alone!
- Off, off!
With hay on the floor and a bucket.
And that's all!
Off! Off! Off!
Off!
- Here, Mr. Shannon, drink this.
- Untie me!
You can holler
and howl to your heart's content...
...in the Casa de Locos.
All day and all night.
I'm a citizen with inalienable rights. Get
me the consul. I demand to see the consul!
Please, Mr. Shannon,
drink this poppy seed tea.
How can I with the widow Faulk
sitting on me?
Here, give me that tea. I made it.
I'll give it to him.
Drink this, you buzzard!
It's scalding.
Thank you, Maxine.
That's all I needed.
To have my mouth burned raw.
Now, if you could put some splinters
of bamboo under my fingernails...
...and have my eyelids cut off...
- Mrs. Faulk, let me.
Okay, honey.
You take over completely.
He's entirely yours.
May I make a further suggestion,
Maxine?
Why don't you go moonlight bathing
with your beach boys.
Don't let my presence stop you, any more
than old Fred's presence used to stop you.
You bastard!
Pepe.
Pedro.
You no-good bastard!
That was cruel, Mr. Shannon.
Childishly cruel.
I can't stand for a person I respect
to behave like a small, cruel boy.
Now, what do you respect in me,
Miss Thin-Standing-Up-Female-Buddha?
I respect anybody who has had to...
...fight and howl for his decency.
What decency?
- Yes. His decency.
And his...
His bit of goodness.
Far more than I respect
those lucky ones who've...
...had theirs handed out to them at birth...
...and never afterwards snatched
away from them by unbearable torments.
A chronicle no longer gold
A bargaining with mist and mold
Listen to him,
saying them over and over.
The lines of his new poem.
Like a blind man climbing a staircase
that leads nowhere.
Should you be in there
helping him?
He'll call me when he needs me.
Drink this, Mr. Shannon.
I have no right to ask the question...
...but why did you go to such lengths
to protect Miss Fellowes...
...for whom you have no high regard...
...and to equal lengths to hurt Mrs. Faulk,
for whom you have?
Maxine's indestructible.
Is she?
Or does she just give that impression?
The only impression Maxine
gives is herself. Maxine's Maxine.
And I'm a no-good bastard.
Lay it to the drink. I'm a bad drunk.
You were drunk when you came
to Miss Fellowes' rescue.
I got drunker.
Drink isn't your problem, Mr. Shannon.
And what is my problem, Miss Jelkes?
The oldest one in the world.
The need to believe in someone,
or something.
Almost anyone. Almost anything.
- Your voice sounds hopeless about it.
- Oh, no, I'm not hopeless about it.
In fact, I've...
I've discovered something to believe in.
What?
Broken barriers between people.
A wanting to help each other.
Through nights like this.
One-night stands.
One-night communications
between them.
On a veranda...
...outside their separate cubicles.
You don't mean physically, do you?
- No.
- I didn't think you did.
An intercourse not well-designed
For beings of a golden kind
Whose native green must arch above
The earth's obscene, corrupting love
Is that what you advocate for me?
Is that what you call a human
relationship, you and Grandpa there?
Yes, Mr. Shannon. Yes. Yes, I do.
We make a home for each other,
my grandfather and I.
Oh, I don't mean a regular home,
because...
...I don't regard a home as a...
As a place, a building...
...bricks, wood, stone.
I think of a home...
...as something two people have
between them.
In which each can...
...nest, rest...
...live in, emotionally speaking.
Does that make any sense to you,
Mr. Shannon?
Yes, but...
Well, go on. But what?
Oh, leave it, I'd only say something
to hurt you.
I'm not thin-skinned, Mr. Shannon.
Very well. When a bird builds a nest
to rest in and live in...
...he doesn't build it in a falling-down tree.
- I'm not a bird, Mr. Shannon.
He builds with an eye to the permanence
of the location, and for the purpose of...
...mating and propagating the species.
I still say I'm not a bird, Mr. Shannon.
I'm a human being.
And when one of that unique species...
...builds its nest in the heart of another...
...the questions of permanence
and propagation...
...aren't the first, or even
the last things to be considered.
What is important...
...is that one is never alone.
You've been asking all the questions,
Miss Jelkes. May I ask one of you?
Ask it. There's no limit on questions
here tonight.
And on answers?
None that I can think of, Mr. Shannon,
between you and me.
This, then, is the question.
Have you never in your life
had any kind of...
...love life?
Would you mind repeating the question?
Have you never in your life or travels
had any encounter with any experience of...
...what Larry the Crackpot
would describe as a love life?
There are worse things than chastity,
Mr. Shannon.
Yes, lunacy and death.
Well, if you don't want to answer
the question...
No, no, I don't mind answering.
Yes.
Yes. I have had two experiences...
Well, encounters with.
Two.
Yes, I said two.
When I was 16.
Sixteen.
Yes, 16.
When I was 16...
...every Saturday I would go
to the Saturday matinee...
...at the Nantucket Movie Theater.
That was soon after my parents were
killed in an automobile accident...
...and I was very alone.
Well, one day a young man...
...sat down beside me
and pushed his knee against mine.
I moved over but he moved over too,
and continued the pressure.
I jumped up and screamed...
...and he was arrested
for molesting a minor.
Is he still in the Nantucket jail?
No. No, I got him out.
I told the police it was a Garbo picture.
It was a Garbo picture.
And that I was just overexcited.
And the second?
The second experience
is much more recent.
Only four years ago,
when Nonno and I were in Hong Kong.
One evening...
...in the Palm Court of Cliff Hotel...
...we met this middle-aged, sort of...
...nondescript Australian salesman.
You know, plump, bald, spotted,
and terribly over-friendly.
I did a sketch of him
that was shamelessly flattering...
...for which he paid me
more than my usual price.
Ten Malayan dollars.
Then, he asked me out
in a sampan with him.
Well, he'd been so generous...
...I accepted.
I did.
I accepted.
Grandfather went up to bed.
And I went out in the sampan...
...with the Aussie underwear salesman.
I noticed he became more and more...
What?
Agitated.
Well, finally, he leant towards me.
We were vis--vis in the sampan.
And he looked intensely and passionately
into my eyes and said:
"Miss Jelkes, would you do me a favor?
Would you do something for me?"
"What?" I asked.

"Well," he said:
"If I turn my back...
...if I look the other way...
...will you take off some piece
of your clothing and let me hold it?
Just hold it."
And what did you do in this situation?
I did as he asked.
And he kept his promise.
He kept his back turned
until I said "Ready"...
...and threw him the piece of my clothing.
But what did he do with it?
I don't know.
I looked the other way.
- And that experience, you call that a...?
- A love experience?
Yes, I do, Mr. Shannon.
That sad little, dirty little episode, you call it a...
Sad, it certainly was for the poor little man. But why do you call it dirty?
You mean you weren't disgusted by it?
Nothing human disgusts me, Mr. Shannon.
Unless it's unkind or violent.
And I told you how...
How gentle he was. Apologetic, shy.
And really very...
...well...
...delicate about it.
However, I do grant you that it was rather on the fantastic level.
What are you doing?
Untying you.
Why? Why now?
I think the spook is exorcised, Mr. Shannon. You've ceased to struggle.
And acceptance of life is surely the first requisite for living it.
Who was the person you told Maxine you'd helped through a crackup like this?
Oh, that.
Myself.
Oh. Oh, you?
Oh, yes.
I had a spook like yours once.
I just had a different name for him.
I used to call him the "blue devil."
- And we had quite a contest between us.
- Which you...
Which you won.
I couldn't afford to lose.
How did you...?
How did you beat this blue devil of yours?
I showed him I could endure him.
- And made him respect my endurance.
- How?
Just by enduring.
Endurance is something that spooks
and blue devils respect.
And they respect all the tricks...
...that panicky people use to outwit
and outlast their panic.
Like taking a few deep,
deep breaths?
Or rum-cocos.
Or even beach boys.
Anything. Everything we do
to give them the slip.
So keep on going.
To where?
To somewhere like this, perhaps.
After long and difficult travels...
...the subterranean travels
that the spooked and bedeviled take...
...through the unlighted sides of
their own natures until finally...
...they see a faint gray light.
And keep climbing towards it.
Are you still following
that faint gray light?
Any light is a good light to see by
at the end of a long, dark tunnel...
...that you thought would be
never-ending.
That only God or death
could put a stop to.
Especially when you...
Since I was
far from sure about God.
Are you still unsure about him?
Not as unsure as I was.
He's still struggling.
Yes. He's got to the end of his rope.
And any further, he cannot get.
Can you honestly tell me
that he is not able to feel pain and panic?
- You mean, he's one of God's creatures?
- Yes, if you want to put it that way.
Mr. Shannon, cut him loose.
All right.
We'll play God tonight, like kids play houses
with old broken crates and boxes.
We'll cut the lizard loose
so that he can go back to his bushes.
Because God won't do it
and we are playing God here tonight.
Mr. Shannon.
I knew you'd do that.
What the hell are you doing, Shannon?
I just cut loose one of God's creatures
at the end of his rope.
What for?
So that one of God's creatures
could be free from panic...
...and scamper home safe and free.
A little act of grace, Maxine.
Hannah! Hannah! Hannah!
Where are you?
Here, Grandfather.
Right here.
It finished! Quick, before I forget it,
pencil and paper. Hurry, please!
- Ready?
- Yes. All ready, Grandfather.
How calmly does the olive branch
Observe the sky begin to blanch
Without a cry, without a prayer
With no betrayal of despair
Some time while night obscures the tree
The zenith of its life will be
Gone past forever
And from thence
A second history will commence
A chronicle no longer gold
A bargaining with mist and mold
And finally, the broken stem
The plummeting to earth
And then, an intercourse
Not well designed for beings
Of a golden kind
Whose native green must arch above
The earth's obscene, corrupting love
And still the ripe fruit and the branch
Observe the sky begin to blanch
Without a cry, without a prayer
With no betrayal of despair
Oh, courage
Could you not as well
Select a second place to dwell
Not only in that golden tree
But in the frightened heart of me?
Have you got that, Hannah?
Yes, Grandfather.
- All of it?
- Every word.
- And it's finished?
- Yes.
- Finally finished?
- Yes, finally finished.
And it's good.
Beautiful.
- Is it good?
- Beautiful, Grandfather.
Oh, Grandfather, I'm so happy for you.
Thank you for writing such a lovely poem.
It was worth the long wait.
Can you sleep a little now?
I'll fetch your shawl.
I'd like to pray now.
Oh, God.
Please can't we stop now?
He won't need the shawl.
God has played God
and set him free.
Oh, courage
Could you not as well
Have found a second place to dwell
Not only in that golden tree
But in the frightened heart of me?
Miss Jelkes.
What are you doing?
You're not gonna leave us today, are you?
There's no reason to delay.
Everything has been done.
Thanks to your kindness
and Mrs. Faulk's...
...Dr. Lopez and all the good people
in the village.
I know now why he insisted
we go on with this trip.
He knew it was the end.
And he wanted it to come where he could
be buried peacefully on a green hilltop...
...within sight and sound of the sea,
his "cradle of life."
- You're going on, are you?
- Yes, naturally.
- Where?
- Well, first I shall go into town...
...and try my luck in the plaza.
What luck do you expect in the plaza?
Do you expect the old lady selling tacos
to buy your sketches like hotcakes?
There'll be some tourists, and I shall give
them what is known as the "hard sell."
Miss Jelkes, you're not operating
on the realistic level.
Yes, I am. We are operating
on a realistic level...
...when we are doing the things
that have to be done.
But you can't go on alone. Think of how
it will feel after so many years.
I shall know how it feels when I feel it.
Miss Jelkes, I wonder...
Yes. What do you wonder?
Well, I was wondering...
...if it was possible for us
to travel together.
I mean, travel together.
Do you really think we could?
I don't see why not,
both of us sort of at loose ends.
I feel sure the impracticality of it
would be all too clear to you later.
I think it would only prove awkward
and embarrassing for both of us.
- Miss Jelkes...
- I wonder if Mrs. Faulk is about?
- I would like to thank her.
- Yeah.
She's about.
And about to make an announcement.
Sit down, you two.
Sit down.
I got a proposition to make, a business proposition.
You know, Miss Jelkes, honey, you impress me.
Very favorably. The way you dished up that fish and all.
So favorably, in fact, that I'm prepared to make you the following proposition.
What proposition, Mrs. Faulk?
I want a Coke.
Beer. Beer!
My proposition is this:
that you take over here.
The place furnishes a living plus a neat little profit.
I take in about 4000 a year, after expenses.
Four thousand dollars.
It wouldn't surprise me if you couldn't do even better...
...provided Shannon there didn't drink up your share of the profits.
Well, that's the deal.
We split the profits fifty-fifty.
Even-steven.
Share and share alike.
Does that make any sense to you?
Maxine. Are you all right?
Of course I'm all right.
What do you mean, am I all right?
My only reason for including you on this deal is a man's presence is required.
There's gotta be a man. That's one of the basic principles of hotel administration.
There's gotta be a man to make the place attractive to the ladies.
Wives of the men that go fishing.
Matter of fact, my offer is contingent on the presence of a man.
- There's no deal unless Shannon stays on.
- What about you, Mrs. Faulk?
Me? I'm fed up with this place.
Fed up to the teeth, into the gums
and the jawbone.
- Jungle rot's set in.
- Where are you going?
Well, I'm not going on any
of your Blake Tours, that's for sure!
I'm heading north.
Air-conditioned cocktail lounges.
Fifteen-to-one martinis and mirrors that
don't scare you when they look at you!
You know, I'm a young woman. Attractive,
too, if I can get to a decent beauty parlor.
Don't you worry about the widow Faulk.
She'll have a ball!
- Fantastic.
- Yes, Mr. Shannon.
Fantastic is what it is.
You were building your nest
and you didn't even know it.
- Goodbye.
- Goodbye.
- At least let me drive you into town.
- No, thank you, I prefer to walk.
What you could do for me, though,
is have my luggage sent in after me.
Oh, I almost forgot.
I found this in the pocket of my smock
when I was packing this morning.
Yes, I want you to have it.
I couldn't possibly accept,
Mr. Shannon.
No, take it, please. Hock it.
It'll pay your way back to the States.
That's a real amethyst...
...so don't let the local loan shark
give you less than 1800 pesos for it.
Its value has been well-established
over the years.
Very well, Mr. Shannon.
I'll send the pawn ticket
back to you so that you can redeem it.
- What are you doing, Maxine?
- Packing.
Go on, fall apart.
Everything's falling apart,
including you and Shannon!
Complimentary rum-coco.
It's a speciality of the Costa Verde.
I don't want a rum-coco. If I wanted
a rum-coco, I'd make a rum-coco.
She's gone, Maxine.
The poem's finished.
You mean she's not gonna
take me up on my proposition?
Oh, she's not.
I am.
That is, if you...
If you really need a man around here.
It's not hot yet, Shannon.
Why don't we go down to the beach.
Well, I can...
I can get down the hill, Maxine,
but I'm not too sure about getting...
...back up.
I'll get you back up, baby.
I'll always get you back up.