

Clifford Mason



The Verandah

A PLAY IN SIX SCENES

CAST OF CHARACTERS

FATHER SWABY	A solicitor, sixties
MOTHER SWABY	His second wife of 30 years, fifties
TREVOR	His oldest son, a high school teacher, late thirties - forty
JOSEPHS	Swaby's neighbor to the right, late fifties.
CYNTHIA	The Swabys' daughter, late twenties
BERTIE	Their younger son, midtwenties
MONICA CHIN QUEE	Trevor's mistress, early thirties, Chinese
MRS. JOHNSON	The housekeeper, late seventies
GLORIA	The maid for the front of the house, late twenties
ADC	Swaby's life long male servant, late eighties
MOOTILAL PABOOSINGH	Cynthia's man at the gate, East Indian, Hindu.

TIME: 1939

PLACE: JAMAICA, WEST INDIES

Calabash

SCENE I

SUNDAY EVENING BEFORE DUSK

(18¼ Lady Musgrave Road on the Liguanea Plain in St. Andrew. TREVOR is sitting on the front verandah reading the newspaper and drinking tea. GLORIA comes out in cap and apron and pours some more for him and adds milk and sugar and leaves before he looks up or says anything. He turns the page and folds it out continuing a story from page one. FATHER SWABY comes out with his scissors and gloves and watering can. He eyes Trevor closely, smells the tea in the pot and makes a deprecating sound.)

FATHER SWABY

Humph. Orange pekoe, bought from the Chinaman.

TREVOR

I drink what they give me.

FATHER SWABY

I happen to grow the best mint in St. Andrew. Why for heaven's sake won't you drink that instead of this lye.

TREVOR

I drink what they give me.

(He takes a sip, still reading.)

FATHER SWABY

(He goes to the edge of the verandah, right, and pulls a leaf of mint from his potted plant.)

Here, smell this. Just smell it.

TREVOR

(He stops reading to smell it.)

Excellent aroma, but I couldn't possibly drink it.

FATHER SWABY

And why not?

TREVOR

Because of the milk.

FATHER SWABY

What has the milk got to do with it?

TREVOR

Everything. You see, your mint is all well and good by itself. But mix it with milk and what have you got? An absolutely insipid concoction.

FATHER SWABY

So don't mix it with milk.

Calabash

TREVOR

Don't be absurd. What is the four o'clock tea ritual without milk? Nothing. No, one does have to have milk in one's tea at four o'clock. Even if it is almost six.

FATHER SWABY

If one is the sort of one who is so proper that one has to out English the English, then one has to. But if one were a different one from that one, then one might be proud of what one has come from, of what grows in one's country, and therefore is a part of what one is, which is

(He spells it out.)

J-A-M-A-I-C-A-N and not English. That is, if one were actually a whole one instead of only half of one, as one obviously is. Does one understand?

TREVOR

Yes, father.

(Back to his paper.)

I see your point, of course. By the way, your English roses haven't done well this year, have they?

FATHER SWABY

England had nothing to do with the growing of my roses.

TREVOR

Are you sure?

FATHER SWABY

As sure as I have to be.

TREVOR

I would have thought that a solicitor needed to be more particular about his facts than that.

FATHER SWABY

There are facts that are of interest to a man and then there are obscure bits of petty detail that fascinate boys.

TREVOR

You're so clever, father. You should have been a barrister.

FATHER SWABY

Why? Do they make any money? They get a case maybe twice a year, and then only if I give them one.

Calabash

TREVOR

You or someone else.

FATHER SWABY

It's obvious that I was speaking generically. One does understand that, doesn't one?

(Just then the band concert at Hope Gardens begins with the band playing GOD SAVE THE KING. It's heard in the distance.)

TREVOR

The band concert at Hope is just beginning. They're playing God Save the King.

FATHER SWABY

Then why don't you stand at attention and salute for christ's sake.

(MOTHER SWABY comes out. Father Swaby takes one look at her and goes down into the garden, after making another deprecating sound, this time at her.)

MOTHER SWABY

And how are you this evening, Trevor?

TREVOR

Fine, Mater. And yourself?

MOTHER SWABY

Oh, it's such a lovely evening. I feel absolutely exhilarated.

TREVOR

Yes, there's a good breeze coming from the mountain.

MOTHER SWABY

And they're playing God Save the King.

TREVOR

Yes. The guango tree looks bigger than ever.

MOTHER SWABY

And the lignum vitae is as strong as a rock.

TREVOR

But father's roses haven't done well.

MOTHER SWABY

No, poor dear. But his mint on the other hand...

TREVOR

Ah, his mint! It fills the air with an aroma that is so pungent that it's sensual in its redolence. It literally caroms about like an elfin in a dance.

Calabash

MOTHER SWABY

My dear, I don't understand a word you're saying. You know I didn't have your advantages as a child.

TREVOR

Yes, that's why father treats you so dreadfully, because you're a tradesman's daughter.

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, it's your mother he really loved. She was so beautiful and delicate, like one of his pink roses. I used to see her when she was a young girl. She'd pass by our house in the horse and buggy.

TREVOR

When did my mother pass by your house ever, even in a horse and buggy?

MOTHER SWABY

Oh that was only once a month, when she'd go to town to visit the Campbells.

TREVOR

Of, of course, the Campbells.

MOTHER SWABY

What did it mean, dear? I so like to be educated by you.

TREVOR

(Back to his paper.)
What did what mean?

MOTHER SWABY

What you said about the mint. That it was ... so pungent that it was sensual in its redolence.

TREVOR

That the fragrance was so pleasingly strong that it could create a sexual arousal. Which might have been reaching a bit.

MOTHER SWABY

In the case of your father's mint, I would say yes, it most definitely was reaching a bit.

TREVOR

(He laughs, enjoying the joke with her.)

MOTHER SWABY

Shall I get you more tea, this seems to have gotten cold.

//
Calabash

(As she picks up the pot, Father Swaby comes back up from the garden.)

FATHER SWABY

Let the servants do the fetching and carrying for god's sake. That's what they're for! You can take a bitch out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the bitch.

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, dear, of course. Any tea for you?

FATHER SWABY

No. Rum and water. No ice.

MOTHER SWABY

The way you always take it.

FATHER SWABY

Yes.

TREVOR

But I thought Sealey said you weren't to drink.

MOTHER SWABY

Oh he isn't to, but your father's lived this long in spite of the doctor, so there's no reason why he shouldn't continue until it kills him. You must remember your father's done his living, all of it. He's been a war hero, a sports hero, an American adventurer, a colonial student in London, and a successful lawyer. He's seen it all and he's done it all.

FATHER SWABY

(Settling himself down.)

Including the women. I've done them too. Don't forget that.

MOTHER SWABY

Oh yes. There've been so many of them, so very, very many. And now that the women and the wars and the adventure are all gone, there's nothing left. Nothing except the rum and maybe the dying.

(She takes up the tea pot again.)

Since I'm going in anyway, I might just as well take the tea.

(She exits.)

FATHER SWABY

Well, what're the cricket scores?

TREVOR

From England?

Calabash

FATHER SWABY

No, from Hawaii. Of course from England. Where else?

TREVOR

(Without looking up.)

They beat Australia again. Means they've kept the Ashes.

FATHER SWABY

Phhh. They'd never play us.

TREVOR

Even if they did, they'd never play you for the Ashes.

FATHER SWABY

Of course not, because they know we'd give them a proper thrashing.

TREVOR

With your weekend cricketers against their professionals who do nothing else seven days a week but play cricket and have been playing it against world class competition for as long as there's been a game to play, since they invented it.

FATHER SWABY

So what! I could lick the whole lot with half a team of good Jamaicans.

TREVOR

Oh you mean if a man is black he's twice as good as anyone else.

FATHER SWABY

Anyone!

TREVOR

Especially an Englishman.

FATHER SWABY

Especially!

(Gloria comes out with fresh tea.)

FATHER SWABY

Where's my rum?

GLORIA

Mrs. Swaby bringing it, sar.

FATHER SWABY

Well see that she does and hurry up about it.

—//—
Calabash

GLORIA

Yes, sar.
(*She exits.*)

TREVOR

Aren't you worried, really. Don't forget, your father died of cirrhosis of the liver.

FATHER SWABY

That's a lie. My father died while he was humping the maid.

TREVOR

He did not.

FATHER SWABY

He did so. Were you there?

TREVOR

Don't tell me you were.

FATHER SWABY

Anyway, it doesn't matter how he died.

TREVOR

Suppose he'd died a hero, wouldn't that have mattered?

FATHER SWABY

Any poor slob can die a hero. What does it take to show off for a few minutes? nothing. If you're dying anyway you know damn well you won't have to do it for long, so any bastard can pull it off. But show me a man who can do it who doesn't have to, who's full of life and in his prime, with everything to lose. Now that bastard is brave because he doesn't want to die. And for him, even if it is heroic, it's a complete loss. And that makes him a sucker for even trying.

TREVOR

There's a stillness at Appomattox.

FATHER SWABY

Why?

TREVOR

I don't know why.

FATHER SWABY

What the hell are you talking about?

//
Calabash

TREVOR

Appomattox, in America. It's where Lee surrendered to Grant after he'd lost the Civil War.

FATHER SWABY

What do you know about America?

TREVOR

Nothing really, but it seems like a fascinating country.

FATHER SWABY

Well it isn't, take my word for it.

TREVOR

When they call a black man a Negro in America, do they mean any black man or only a black black man.

FATHER SWABY

They don't know what they mean.

TREVOR

Oh, oh. Here comes Josephs.

FATHER SWABY

What the hell does that bastard want.

TREVOR

I don't know, but if you're going to have a row, I'll go for a walk.

FATHER SWABY

No, stay for god's sake. That's the only thing that will keep me from stabbing him with the garden shears.

(JOSEPHS comes up onto the verandah from the front, stage right.)

FATHER SWABY

My dear Josephs, how are you?

(Big smile.)

JOSEPHS

What a way some a we can sound English though. "My dear Josephs, how are you?" I'm fine my deah Swaby, and how are you? And you, my deah Trevor? Fine you say, then I say I'm glad to hear it, my dear boy, and I'm fine too.

(Pretends to have a mustache, which he twirls as he continues.)

JOSEPHS

And now that we're all fine, I say that's jolly good, jolly good.

—//—
Calabash

(He waits for a beat.)

Shall I take a chair? I think so, rawther, don't I?

(He sits, crossing his legs and grinning at the two of them.)

FATHER SWABY

Isn't it enough that I've let you into my neighborhood. Do I have to put up with your pestering on top of it?

JOSEPHS

Oh, is your neighborhood. I never know that. I thought it was government neighborhood that belong to whosoever could afford to live in it. I know you don't own the road or the water, or my property what I pay good money for. You own the street light? Huh? Or the sidewalk or what? I think firs' thing a mornin' we have to go to Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation and make them know that this is not Lady Musgrave Road, St. Andrew Parish, but is Swaby Heights and him one own the whole a it and everything that run through it, around it, under it and over and in it.

FATHER SWABY

I don't have to own anything except this verandah and what's on it. And I don't have to associate with anyone on my verandah that I don't want to.

TREVOR

Now, father, Mr. Josephs is our neighbor to the right and we must be polite to him. After all, we're polite to the MacPhersons and they're our neighbors to the left. So why can't we be polite to Mr. Josephs.

FATHER SWABY

There are no Josephs, there is just one Josephs.

JOSEPHS

Him don't like me 'cause I'm not cousin to the Campbells like the MacPhersons. I'm not cousins to anybody. I don't even know where my name came from. My mother was a poor, ignorant black woman from St. Elizabeth, god rest her soul. Couldn't even read and write.

FATHER SWABY

Oh. And can you read and write?

JOSEPHS

Not what you could call real readin' and writin'. But I do have ten thousand pounds in the Bank of Nova Scotia.

—//—
Calabash

FATHER SWABY

And do they let you come in through the front door when you want to get any of it, or do you have to go around the back and pass a bag through the window.

(He laughs at his own joke.)

JOSEPHS

No, man, them let me in through the front. Of course now when I reach the cashier and she turn up her nose and ask for all kind a identification and I gi' her everything: bank book, proof of residence, birth certificate, report card, everything, just to draw out my own money, and she still get up and go check with the Englishman. Him come back and him look pon me good. And the two a them go back again and whisper some more. Then she come back again and say I must write my name a second time mek she see. So I write again. Them check that against the card them have in the file. All the while, them steady a look pon me good. And is not 'till a little ole white woman who I did a piece a work for once pass and say, "Good mornin', Mr. Josephs," that them give me my money. And is only ten pounds I did want.

FATHER SWABY

Well, they have to be sure that they're dealing with the right party. After all, they were just trying to protect your money.

JOSEPHS

Oh, I know that. And I appreciate it. But all the same, I see that same yellow gal, that cashier, las' Sat'day night with another Englishman. Look like him did done wid her and she wanted was to go home in a taxi. Him tell her to "Bug off." "Bug off," says he. He wasn't giving her money fe no damn taxi after him did already buy her a half pint a rum. So she a cry her eyeball out when I come up and take pity pon the poor thing and give her five shilling fe get home. She still a cry when she thank me and say that the next time I go to the bank, all I have fe do is come to her window and she will take real good care a me.

TREVOR

Well at least you've solved your bank withdrawal problems.

JOSEPHS

Maybe, but you never know. Next time she might not be there an' I'll have

//
Calabash

to start all over again. What you say to that, Brother Swaby.

FATHER SWABY

Don't brother me. I'm not one of your brothers.

JOSEPHS

I know that. I just wanted to make sure you know it.
(Mother Swaby comes on with rum and glasses on a tray.)

FATHER SWABY

Well, it's about time.

JOSEPHS

Hello, Mistress Swaby.

MOTHER SWABY

Hello, Mr. Josephs. I heard your voice so I bought an extra glass. I know Mr. Swaby doesn't like to drink alone.

FATHER SWABY

That's a damn lie. When have you ever heard me say that I didn't like to drink alone, when? I love to drink alone. I just love it.

TREVOR

No, you don't. You're always drinking with the MacPhersons.

FATHER SWABY

What the hell have they got to do with it?

JOSEPHS

Is all right. If him don't want me to have a drink from him bottle, I can do without. I have plenty bottle at home.

MOTHER SWABY

Oh you mustn't take Mr. Swaby seriously, Mr. Josephs. That's just his way. He doesn't really mean anything by it.

FATHER SWABY

Who says I don't mean anything by it. Who? What's the matter around here? Can't I talk for myself. Don't I have a mouth and a tongue? Well, don't I?

MOTHER SWABY

(She has poured two drinks and added water to Father Swaby's during this.)
Yes, dear.

—//—
Calabash

FATHER SWABY

You're damn right I do. And I say I do mean anything by it.

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, dear, of course you do.

JOSEPHS

Then you don't want anybody to drink with you?

FATHER SWABY

No!

TREVOR

Too bad. I was just about to have one.

FATHER SWABY

I didn't say you couldn't have one. Did I say he couldn't have one, did I?

MOTHER SWABY

No, dear, you didn't.

TREVOR

Then what's all the fuss about.

JOSEPHS

Indeed. Uh, no water for me.

FATHER SWABY

(He just makes an anguished sound.)

MOTHER SWABY

Why, Mr. Josephs, do you really take your rum straight. My father used to drink it that way too. I've always admired a man who could drink his rum straight.

FATHER SWABY

Oh, you have, have you?

(He throws his rum away and slams his glass down.)

Pour!

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, dear.

(She pours.)

FATHER SWABY

(He swills it down.)

Is that all it takes to get your admiration.

//
Calabash

JOSEPHS

But stop. First you throw good, good rum, what you ask fuh, on your roses..

FATHER SWABY

What the hell business is it of yours what I throw on my roses.

JOSEPHS

(Continuing.)

Then you get your darling wife to give you more rum, and you swallow that down like is water. Bad for your liver if you drink too fast you know, old man.

FATHER SWABY

(Apoplectic)

I don't give a rass about my liver!

MOTHER SWABY

But you should, dear, you should.

TREVOR

Well, cheers.

JOSEPHS

Cheers!

MOTHER SWABY

(She takes a drink too.)

Cheers!

FATHER SWABY

And since when did you start drinking in public?

MOTHER SWABY

Oh, it's all right, dear. Mr. Josephs is like one of the family.

FATHER SWABY

(Spitting out a fresh drink.)

What! What! Wha, wha...wha

(He starts stuttering.)

TREVOR

Careful, father, you'll get apoplectic.

FATHER SWABY

I am apoplectic!

CYNTHIA

(She comes out from the house singing from THE MIKADO.)

Calabash

CYNTHIA

The flowers that bloom in the spring, tra, la,
Bring promise of merry sunshine,
As we gaily dance and we sing, tra la
Of flowers that bloom in the spring.
And that's what we mean when we say or we sing
Tra, la, la, la, la, la tra, la, la, la, la, lah.

(Then she disappears down the steps and past the front lawn, stage right.)

MOTHER SWABY

Dinner will be served promptly at seven, dear. Mind you're back by then.

CYNTHIA

(She's heard "tra, la, la, la, la ing" as she goes off, doing it almost as in a response.)

JOSEPHS

What a fine voice she has.

FATHER SWABY

(Sulking.)

How do you know she's got a fine voice?

JOSEPHS

I just heard her, didn't I?

TREVOR

She's practicing, actually.

JOSEPHS

What for?

FATHER SWABY

What difference does it make?

MOTHER SWABY

Oh, Mr. Swaby, you're such a tease. She's in the pantomime. They're doing
The Mikado from Gilbert & Sullivan. Isn't it wonderful.

JOSEPHS

And that's one of the songs she's going to sing?

MOTHER SWABY

Yes.

JOSEPHS

What a shame.

//
Calabash

FATHER SWABY

What a shame what?

JOSEPHS

That a fine looking Jamaican girl like that can't sing a rukun bine or a nice calypso or whatever, instead of some white man's song.

FATHER SWABY

And what's wrong with a white man's song? Doesn't he have just as much right to write a song as anyone else?

JOSEPHS

Oh I don't say he don't have a right to write it. It's just a shame she have to sing it.

FATHER SWABY

Why is it a shame? If it's a good song, then why shouldn't she sing it?

MOTHER SWABY

(Starting off a little strong for her, and then getting quiet at "dear.")
When did you get so pro-British, dear?

FATHER SWABY

I'm not pro-British!

JOSEPHS

You sure don't sound like it.

TREVOR

You mustn't be too hard on father, Mr. Josephs. He tries to hate the Englishman, but he just can't quite manage it.

JOSEPHS

Yes, I know what you mean. It's a pity too when you come right down to it, because he's such a fine, upstanding Jamaican man, all in all.

FATHER SWABY

(To Josephs.)

Why are you talking to him about it? He's the worst black Englishman alive. All day long he sits up there in that college and lectures on Shakespeare and Goldsmith and Sheridan and the rest of that rotten lot. I spend all my time trying to make him realize he was born in Kingston, not Stratford on Avon.

JOSEPHS

Shame on you. You shouldn't talk about your own flesh and blood like that.

//
Calabash

MOTHER SWABY

Have another drink, dear.

FATHER SWABY

You go to hell, the lot of you. Just go to hell!

(He gets up and stalks into the garden and begins watering his lawn.)

TREVOR

He loves to water his own garden. The gardener boy can do everything else, but father won't let him water the garden.

MOTHER SWABY

(She sits beside Mr. Josephs.)

Have another drink, Mr. Josephs.

JOSEPHS

Don't mind if I do.

MOTHER SWABY

And you, Trevor?

TREVOR

Why not?

MOTHER SWABY

And one for me.

(They all drink again.)

JOSEPHS

(After a slight pause.)

Where's your other son, Mistress Swaby, the one that's really yours. I haven't seen him around lately.

MOTHER SWABY

Oh you mustn't say that, Mr. Josephs. Trevor is as dear to me as if he were my very own.

JOSEPHS

Oh I have nothing against Trevor. He's a fine young man. Very upstanding and well educated. A credit to you and to everyone. But there's nothing like your own you know, Mrs. Swaby. Your own should come first. Blood before anything else I always say.

TREVOR

And what about me? My blood's dead. At least half of it is. The other half is watering the lawn. And Cynthia and Bertie are just that, only half blood.

—//—
Calabash

Does that mean that I must be only half loved?

JOSEPHS

Of course not. You must find a woman of your own and start your own tree growing. Then you will be the patriarch. Whatever comes from you will be your blood and yours alone. Remember, "God bless the child who's got his own."

TREVOR

It's not blood that makes the difference, Mr. Josephs.

JOSEPHS

Not blood alone. But blood along with something else. Familiarity, having the same things in common, living together, sharing life's pleasures as well as life's pain.

TREVOR

The old brutalize their young, brothers kill each other off, sisters try to marry the same man and one family takes a blood oath to destroy the other. And as for familiarity, about the only thing we're sure of is that it breeds contempt.

JOSEPHS

Oh, I don't know. Take Mistress Swaby and me for instance. We're both poor people from the country, members of the lower classes, you might say. She goes and married an uppercrust like your father and it's all right because she's what you call lower middle. Not too too lower, but not too much middle either. But me now, I'm definitely not in the middle anyway at all. I'm bottom, bottom. But we both come from the same part of the Bush, so that means that we know one another, really know one another, like family, like blood. Your father, while I respect him, will never know her the way I know her. Never. Don't care how long he lives.

MOTHER SWABY

Trevor understands, dear. He's got the same problem.

JOSEPHS

(Surprised.)
He does.

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, dear.

//
Calabash

TREVOR

I really should leave you two alone, but since father is not going to go farther than eye shot of you and since dinner is almost ready, you'll forgive me if I stay and share your little rendezvous.

MOTHER SWABY

Of course, dear. Mr. Josephs doesn't mind. He's fond of you. He's just told you that.

(She touches Mr. Josephs' hand.)

TREVOR

Careful, he's looking this way.

MOTHER SWABY

(She turns out.)

And here comes Monica. Now you won't be left out, dear.

TREVOR

Yes. I'll just go to the gate and meet her.

(He exits front towards the gate.)

GLORIA

(She comes out.)

When you want dinner served, Ma'am?

MOTHER SWABY

Go and see if Mr. Bertie is ready to come down.

GLORIA

Him in him room sleep.

MOTHER SWABY

Then wake him.

GLORIA

You mean I must go in him room when him one in there?

MOTHER SWABY

Of course. He won't bite you. And wake Mistress Johnson too.

GLORIA

Yes, ma'am.

(She goes back in.)

JOSEPHS

Why won't you leave this man and marry me, Mistress Swaby?

//
Calabash

MOTHER SWABY

Because I'm already married.

JOSEPHS

But you want to be with me, not him.

MOTHER SWABY

I am with you, Mr. Josephs.

JOSEPHS

I don't mean like this. I mean all the time.

MOTHER SWABY

I couldn't do that to Mr. Swaby.

JOSEPHS

That bastard. All he does is mistreat you. He just have you around so he can cuss you. He's still in love with that yellow gal he married over a hundred and four years ago.

MOTHER SWABY

Thirty-five.

JOSEPHS

What difference does it make?

(ADC comes out looking for Father Swaby.)

ADC

Evening, Mrs.

MOTHER SWABY

Evening, ADC.

ADC

You want me to do anything for you, sir, before dinner?

MOTHER SWABY

This isn't Mr. Swaby, ADC. It's Mr. Josephs.

ADC

Eh! And how come him sitting in Mastah's chair and you next to him. I don't think I like that. I don't think him goin' like that either. Where him is?

MOTHER SWABY

Where he usually is before dinner.

//
Calabash

ADC

Oh. Then I better bring him another rum 'fore him start sneezing.

MOTHER SWABY

Oh I don't think so, ADC. It's not chilly this evening. Why don't you just go back to your room and lie down a bit if you're tired.

ADC

But I'm not tired.

(Straightens up to prove it.)

MOTHER SWABY

Then you can get your supper from cook if you want to.

ADC

What! Eat before he does. I would never do that.

MOTHER SWABY

Well, you don't have to stand there as if you're at attention.

ADC

Yes, I do.

MOTHER SWABY

Why?

ADC

(He edges towards her.)

Him! I can't leave you alone with him.

MOTHER SWABY

But Mr. Josephs is our neighbor. He's a friend of the family.

ADC

I thought the MacPhersons were our neighbors.

MOTHER SWABY

That's to the left.

JOSEPHS

I'm to the right.

ADC

I thought that place was empty.

MOTHER SWABY

It was six months ago.

//
Calabash

ADC

That's not a long time, six months.

JOSEPHS

I guess not, mastah, not to you anyway.

ADC

But stop. You're out of order calling me Mastah. There's only one man can call me mastah, and that is my mastah. And you are not he.

JOSEPHS

Beg your pardon!

ADC

You don't have to beg my pardon about anything.

MOTHER SWABY

Now, now, ADC, that's enough.

(Mrs. Johnson comes out.)

MOTHER SWABY

Why Mistress Johnson, I see Gloria woke you up.

MRS. JOHNSON

She did not. She's been upstairs in your son's room ever since she went in. People think I don't know what goes on, but I do. I may be old, but I'm no fool.

MOTHER SWABY

(Looking out.)

Now where are Trevor and Monica going off to? They're turning out of the gate. I thought he said he was just going to meet her.

JOSEPHS

They probably want to be alone for just a little while. When two people are in love, Mistress Swaby, the most important thing in the whole world is to be alone together. Can you understand that?

MRS. JOHNSON

Oh, she understands it all right. Dirty gal. Never could keep her away from the men. I don't know why Swaby married you in the first place. He knew you weren't a virgin. Everybody knew it. You didn't fool him, you dirty little slut.

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, Mistress Johnson. It's a chill. Why don't you go in and get a shawl.

//
Calabash

MRS. JOHNSON

And leave you two out here to get into mischief. I will not. ADC, get my shawl.

ADC

Can't, I'm standing guard.

MRS. JOHNSON

Bertie's upstairs with the maid, by now he's probably got her clothes off. You're on the front verandah, of all places, entertaining your man friend with your husband not ten feet away. Trevor's gone off with his Chinese wench and Cynthia's somewhere behind a bush, with god only knows who. And I'm left all alone with no one to choose from but ADC, who doesn't have a tooth left in his head, and the gardener boy who's never looked at anything that didn't grow green leaves in his whole life. And you expect me to worry about a chill.

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, Mistress Johnson. I'm going to send you back to the country if you don't behave yourself. You can't work anymore anyway, so what good are you?

JOSEPHS

Whereabouts in the country are you from, Mrs. Johnson?

MRS. JOHNSON

I don't talk to anyone who's darker than I am.

JOSEPHS

Yes, Ma'am. Where's she from?

MOTHER SWABY

Bamboo.

JOSEPHS

You're from Bamboo too, aren't you?

MOTHER SWABY

No, Savannah-la-Mar.

JOSEPHS

I could have sworn you told me Bamboo.

MOTHER SWABY

Well I didn't. I should know where I'm from, shouldn't I?

Calabash

JOSEPHS

Of course.

MRS. JOHNSON

She's a liar. She's always been a liar. Always. Even when she was a little girl she lied.

JOSEPHS

Have you known her ever since then, Mother Johnson?

MRS. JOHNSON

I've known her ever since she was born.

JOSEPHS

Did you know her mother?

MRS. JOHNSON

Of course I did, you idiot.

MOTHER SWABY

I think it's time we all went in.

MRS. JOHNSON

Why, you getting a chill!

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, it's suddenly gotten damp and it's getting late. The band's stopped playing.

ADC

Oh, was the band playing today?

MRS. JOHNSON

Yes, you idiot. It's Sunday. The band always plays on Sunday.

ADC

I remember when they would only allow white men to play in the band.

MOTHER SWABY

That was a long time ago, ADC.

ADC

Oh not so long ago. Do they let black men play in the band now, Mistress?

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, ADC. Even the conductor is black, sometimes.

ADC

Oh that's wonderful. My father would have loved that. He always wanted

Calabash

to play the trumpet, but he had bad front teeth. Couldn't get a good sound. You know you had to have good front teeth in those days to get a good sound.

JOSEPHS

You still do, old man.

ADC

I guess so. Why do white men have such good front teeth?
(They look at one another and no one answers.)

MOTHER SWABY

Trevor and Monica are coming back.

MRS. JOHNSON

He probably smells of sperm.

MOTHER SWABY

I doubt it, Mistress Johnson. Hello.

TREVOR

(Off stage.)

Hello.

(Both Trevor and Monica enter from right and come up onto the verandah.)

MONICA

Good evening everybody.

MOTHER SWABY

Good evening, my dear. Enjoy your walk?

MONICA

Yes, but I would have enjoyed it more if it had been longer.

MRS. JOHNSON

Of course you would, you wench. You're the type who always wants it longer.

MOTHER SWABY

When is your father going to put down the hose so we can get started with dinner, I'm starving.

TREVOR

He wouldn't talk to me when I passed him either time. Seems as if he thinks I took Mr. Josephs side against him. Called me an ingrate.

JOSEPHS

Sorry about that, son. You want me to go talk to him.

—//—
Calabash

TREVOR

No, he'll be all right. Let's go in.

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, let's. Won't you join us for dinner, Mr. Josephs. I hate the thought of anyone eating dinner alone. It's so sad.

JOSEPHS

Oh I'm not alone. I've got the sound of happy laughter coming from here to keep me company.

MONICA

Don't you have any family, Mr. Josephs?

JOSEPHS

No. Only my mother before she died.

MONICA

And you never married?

JOSEPHS

No, never.

MONICA

A man should have a family, Mr. Josephs. Start his own line.

TREVOR

Grow his own tree.

MONICA

(Agreeing with Trevor eagerly.)

Yes!

JOSEPHS

I know. But I never found her. At least if I did, it was always the wrong time or the wrong place.

MONICA

But there must be somebody in the whole wide world for you.

JOSEPHS

For me the world isn't so wide. No wider than the street I live on and the people I've come to know in these my years of tranquility, now that the work is over and the labor has born fruit, the harvest safe and the house secure.

Calabash

TREVOR

The weather warm, the food 'nough and the rum hot.

JOSEPHS

Yes.

MOTHER SWABY

Come in, Mr. Josephs, please!

MRS. JOHNSON

You'd better watch out. It could be his last supper.

(She cackles.)

FATHER SWABY

(He comes up.)

Well, that's that. Are we all ready?

MOTHER SWABY

Yes, dear. We've been trying to get Mr. Josephs to join us for dinner.

FATHER SWABY

Where's Cynthia? Didn't you tell her not to dally.

TREVOR

Here she comes.

FATHER SWABY

ADC!

ADC

(He snaps to attention.)

Sar!

FATHER SWABY

Get me another pair of shoes. These are soaking wet.

ADC

Then I'm relieved of duty?

FATHER SWABY

What the hell are you talking about?

MOTHER SWABY

Nothing, dear. Yes, ADC, you're relieved.

ADC

Hu, faaace. Hup, two. HUP!

(He exits marching.)

Calabash

FATHER SWABY

Monica, my dear.
(He extends his arm. She takes it.)
Mistress Johnson.

MRS. JOHNSON

(She jumps up with glee.)
Well, it's about time you took some notice of me.
(She laughs as she takes the other arm.)

FATHER SWABY

Let's go in. Gloria!

GLORIA

(From inside.)
Sar!

FATHER SWABY

You may make the announcement.

GLORIA

(Still inside.)
Yes, sar. "Dinner is served."

FATHER SWABY

(On his way in.)
Bertie!

BERTIE INSIDE

Coming!
(Father Swaby and the two women go in.)

TREVOR

Mrs. Swaby.
(Indicating his arm to escort her in.)

MOTHER SWABY

(She hesitates.)
Oh, Mr. Josephs, won't you please join us.
(He gets up.)

JOSEPHS

No, I'll just stand here awhile and catch the last light before I go across. The crickets have started.

//
Calabash

TREVOR

Come, Mater, darling.
(The clock starts up.)
It's seven o'clock.

MOTHER SWABY

Yes.
(She takes his arm. Looks back at Josephs and they both go in.)

JOSEPHS

(He stands there looking at the last light.)

MOTHER SWABY

(She's heard calling from within.)
Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

(Off stage, she's heard singing in response again, almost.)
"The flowers that bloom in the spring."

JOSEPHS

(Exits right while she's still singing.)

END OF SCENE I

