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Samuel French Acting Edition

Lucifer's Child

A One-Woman Play by
William Luce

Based on the writings of
Isak Dinesen



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TO JULIE HARRIS
who conceived the idea for this play
visited Karen Blixen's former farm in Kenya
journeyed to the Dinesen family estate
at Rungstedlund in Denmark
before obtaining the rights to produce this play
whose research, knowledge, faith and artistry
are my constant inspiration

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Note: Isak Dinesen's illustration for the story of the stork may be found in *Out of Africa*. The original incidental music composed for the Broadway production is not available. Producers are free to develop their own sound cues. The Danish lullaby used in Act II can be found at the back of this book. Permission to perform *Brown Eyes, Why Are You Blue?* may be obtained from EMI Music Publishing, 810 Seventh Avenue, 36th floor, New York, NY 10019, Attention: Stage Licensing.

ABOUT ISAK DINESEN

When the elderly Isak Dinesen came to New York in 1959 to tell her stories to charmed audiences, I knew little about her. It was not until 1960 that I became acquainted with the writings of this great storyteller. A friend, Kimmis Hendrick, presented me with his worn copy of Dinesen's *Seven Gothic Tales*. Beguiled by the baroque exoticism and dreamlike atmosphere of the stories, I immediately tried to obtain Dinesen's second book, the ravishing *Out of Africa*. After unsuccessfully calling three libraries and several bookstores, I secured a first edition from a rare book dealer. I treasure that first edition, as I do the earlier gift of *Tales* from my friend. Today there are probably few bookstores or libraries which do not carry the timeless, imaginative stories of this brilliant Danish writer. Her tales have been translated into many languages. They are now in popular paperback editions. Two major Academy Award motion pictures, *Out of Africa* and *Babette's Feast*, have most recently increased Isak Dinesen's audience by many millions. Other films are forthcoming. Born Karen Christentze Dinesen on April 17, 1885, Isak Dinesen was raised in an upperclass Victorian family in Rungstedlund, Denmark. Late in 1913, at the age of 28, Karen sailed to Mombasa, where she married her cousin, Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke. They settled on a large plantation in the highlands of Kenya and set about

raising coffee. She became friend and physician to the natives there. But after a few years her marriage to Bror Blixen disintegrated, ending in divorce. In spite of the divorce, Karen remained in Kenya, not only because of her consuming love for one man, the high-born Englishman Denys Finch Hatton, but also because she still hoped to make a success of the coffee plantation. But the land was too high for coffee and it was hard work to keep it going. What was hard work in the beginning became fruitless toil in the end. In 1931 the coffee market collapsed. Then Finch Hatton died in a plane crash. Baroness Blixen returned to her ancestral home in Denmark, bankrupt, bereaved and temporarily defeated, but with aspirations for becoming a writer. For the rest of her life Karen would prefer to be called Baroness, though she adopted Isak Dinesen as her literary name. Her first book was *Seven Gothic Tales*, published in 1934. With the eye of a realist and the soul of a sorceress, she crafted these elegant, seductive, fantastic tales in the style of the ancient soothsayers. "The divine art is the story," she said. "In the beginning was the story." Hers was the primitive art of storytelling that harked back to ancient oral tradition. *Out of Africa* followed in 1937. Her subsequent works were *Winter's Tales* in 1942, *Last Tales* in 1957, *Anecdotes of Destiny* in 1958, *Shadows on the Grass* in 1960 and *Ehrengard* in 1963. Karen lived out her years at Rungstedlund, as ill health gradually took its toll—a result of having contracted syphilis from

her husband during their first year of marriage. With the Faustian rationale of a true mystic, she justified what to most women would have been a tragic plight. She called herself "Lucifer's Child," claiming to have sold her soul to the rebellious, light-bearing Archangel and receiving in exchange a gift of tales which the whole world would read. "I am the child of Lucifer," she wrote to her brother Thomas in 1926, "and the angel's song is not for me." As if by some secret, compassionate Providence, Karen devised this allegorical argument for the plight in which she found herself. She described herself as being caught "in a pit, in a dark place." She wanted out of the dark place all of her life. Her favorite Bible passage was, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" - Jacob's passionate bargain as he struggled with the angel at Peniel. The angel's blessing for Jacob was redemption and the new name, Israel. In her own Peniel experience, Baroness Karen Blixen wrestled with her dark angel and exacted a similar redemption. She became Isak Dinesen, the light-bearing storyteller of the century.

William Luce

OPENING NIGHT: APRIL 4, 1991

THE MUSIC BOX

THE ESTATE OF IRVING BERLIN AND THE SHUBERT ORGANIZATION, OWNERS

RONALD S. LEE

presents

JULIE HARRIS

in

LUCIFER'S CHILD

a new play by

WILLIAM LUCE

based on the writings of Isak Dinesen

Incidental Music by **CHARLES GROSS**

Scenery	Costumes	Lighting
MARJORIE BRADLEY	NOEL	PAT
KELLOGG	TAYLOR	COLLINS

Sound by **T. RICHARD FITZGERALD**

Directed by

TONY ABATEMARCO

LUCIFER'S CHILD was developed and first performed at Duke University, going on to Kennedy Center and Boston before its Broadway opening on April 4, 1991. Julie Harris received a Tony nomination as Best Actress.

CHARACTER

Isak Dinesen, Baroness Karen Blixen

PLACE

Karen Blixen's study at Rungstedlund, Denmark

TIME

Act I: New Year's Eve, 1958

Act II: April, 1959

LUCIFER'S CHILD

ACT I

SETTING: Karen Blixen's study at Rungstedlund, Denmark, is furnished with a desk and chair, a two-door armoire with mirrors inside both doors, a small table and shelves filled with books. Upstage, we see a dining room area with a table and chairs. A door leads out to a veranda. Danish china and Karen's African paintings adorn a high shelf above the portal. There are exotic, colorful artifacts from Africa about. At stage right stands a painted Chinese screen. Before it are a large African-type jardiniere, a burnished chest, and large floor cushions covered in African fabrics. Tall spears stand inside the jardiniere. Near center stage is Karen's desk, on which sits her old Corona typewriter. In a green leather frame on the desk is a photograph of Denys Finch Hatton, with other framed photographs of Karen and family; also pictures of Karen and Bror Blixen in Africa and a champagne glass. Beside the desk are a waste basket, a typewriter case and an ice bucket containing a bottle of champagne. In large porcelain vases are dried flowers. A cuckoo clock and a rifle are mounted on a wall. Beside the armoire at stage left are a lamp table and more floor cushions covered in beautiful African fabrics. On the bottom shelf of the table is a

chamber pot. At far stage left, a gramophone with records sits on the floor.

AT RISE: We see Isak Dinesen's rooms at Rungstedlund, Denmark, on New Year's Eve, 1958. The GRAMOPHONE is playing, "Brown Eyes, Why Are You Blue?" We see suitcases and hat boxes at stage right, where a trunk is open. The room is chaotic. Gowns, hats and furs are draped about, waiting to be packed. At stage left hang more clothes, and in the armoire are clothes as yet unselected. KAREN BLIXEN (ISAK DINESEN), seventy-three, appears onstage in a wilted satin Pierrot costume and plumed hat. SHE is frail and unsteady. SHE carries a pair of shoes in each hand.

KAREN. (*To audience.*) I don't know where I'll pack these. I'm already taking seven pairs. But I may need them in New York. And I'll be in Boston six days.

(SHE wedges the shoes into the open trunk, singing along with the record.)

RECORDED VOICE & KAREN.

Brown eyes, why are you blue?

Brown eyes, what can I do?

KAREN. (*To audience.*) The airlines are so finicky about excess weight. It's not like the old days, when we traveled with trunks. (*SHE has moved to stage left, where SHE removes the needle from the record and turns off the*

machine.) I had nine black enameled iron trunks when I sailed to Africa in 1913. Uncle Aage bought them for me as a wedding present. They had brass Excelsior locks and leather handles. (*SHE opens the armoire door and takes out a mandolin. SHE limps painfully downstage. Her emaciated look is heightened by white makeup and eyes heavily lined with kohl.*) Well? What do you think? The costume, I mean—for a masquerade ball. Who knows? When I go to New York, I may be invited to one. Aunt Lidda made it for me when I was thirteen. It still fits. I wore it for a family theatrical that I wrote. "Harlequin's Folly," I called it. My sisters and I performed it. Ea played Columbine, Elle was Harlequin and I played Pierrot.

(*SHE strums the out-of-key strings, then kneels. Tivoli MUSIC underscores. As Pierrot.*)

KAREN.

Fair Columbine!

Voluptuous care, in whom I hope!

Heed not the blandishments of Harlequin,

But list unto the song I sing,

Embrace the tribute which I bring,

Of lilies white and roses red.

O Columbine,

Be mine!

(*Standing again. To audience.*) The costume was a splendid success. Well, the tulle ruff is lovely. I wore it again last September in Copenhagen at a party for the Heretica writers' group, and it fell flat. I don't know why. It looks the same as it did sixty-one years ago. (*SHE puts*

away the mandolin, then removes two capes from the armoire.) But there's no room in my luggage. Besides, the Ford Foundation has filled my agenda with press conferences and interviews for Random House. No, there'll be no masquerade ball. Anyway, tonight would have been the night for Pierrot's New York début. It's New Year's Eve. Tomorrow is January first, 1959.

On January second I'm leaving for New York, where I'll tell my stories. My secretary-companion, Clara Svendsen, will go with me—my Sancho Panza. Also, Cousin Tove will tag along. Tove is my age. She's a good sort, blunt and earthy. And she carries her weight so well. *(To Clara, calling.)* Clara! Did Tove say she wanted to borrow the burgundy cape or the peacock? *(SHE drops the peacock cape on the cushions. To herself.)* But the burgundy's too small for Tove. *(To audience.)* I give names to all my outfits. This is called Cape of Good Hope. When I named it, I didn't know Tove would be wearing it. *(SHE drops the burgundy cape on the chest at stage right. A suit.)* Over here is Black Grouse. *(A dress.)* Petit Diable. *(Evening gowns.)* Sappho, with sequins. The plunging neckline is Tate Gallery. Hortense. I don't remember why I named this Hortense. *(A suit.)* And this is my favorite. Sober Truth. *(SHE appraises her Pierrot costume in the mirror once more. To herself.)* It does look a bit crushed. Perhaps a little freshening with the iron. Aunt Lidda would be happy to know I still have it. *(SHE hangs Hortense in the armoire, then removes her Pierrot hat. Her hair is gray. SHE sits on the edge of the armoire shelf. To audience.)* Auntie lived to be very old. Her whole world was the geese she tended every day. They were her brood of children. After

the war, she was deathly afraid the communists would take over Denmark and kill the geese. (*To Aunt Lidda.*) No, no, Auntie, the commissars will give you a limousine and driver and send you all over the country inspecting geese. Your title will be "Comrade Goose Lady of the People's Republic of Denmark." (*Standing. To audience.*) I believe a woman's clothes are an extension of her inner being. Perhaps I value clothes too highly. Let me see, what was the first garment I ever gave a name to? Was it the pinafore? (*SHE removes the Pierrot ruff. To Clara.*) Clara! What did I call the blue pinafore? The one in the picture? I told you once. Now I've forgotten. (*To audience.*) Rapunzel. Yes, that sounds right. I think it was Rapunzel. (*Another dress.*) I'll appear in Boston and Washington, as well as in New York City. A keynote speaker, they call me. But I'll only tell my stories. A storyteller is what I am, a member of an ancient, idle, wild and useless tribe. (*A suit.*) Marlene. (*SHE takes Marlene to stage right and hangs it with the other clothes.*) As a child, I kept my sister Elle awake at night by telling stories. (*To Elle, whispering.*) Elle? Elle? (*To audience.*) "Oh, Karen," she'd say, "you're always telling, telling, telling. I'd like to sleep a little, if you don't mind." But I couldn't help myself. The stories have always been there. Prick me with a pin and out they flow.

I go by several names. Karen Christentze Dinesen is the name I was born with, though most call me Tanne. Father called me Ta-Ta. The Danes call me Baroness. For a good many years, I was Baroness von Blixen-Finecke. But my literary name is Isak Dinesen. I always wanted to be a man. Do you like "Isak?" It means "the one who laughs." Tove

says it's misleading. I don't know what she's talking about. (*SHE pauses and surveys the room.*) In this room—long ago—I packed my trousseau, to set sail for Africa. I have sometimes thought of going back there, but, no, I would feel like a ghost. I am too far removed in space and time from that eager, foolish young woman who set her heart on Africa.

(*SHE dons the cape and walks downstage, as if stepping outside. Light change to MOONLIGHT.*)

KAREN. It is my final dream to fly to America. Other dreams have come to nought: to become a great chef in Paris, to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, to start a hospital in Nairobi for Masai children—Dr. Schweitzer talked me out of that one. Now I feel a mysterious emotion, an old excitement, to be packing again—this time for America.

Today Dr. Ziersen said, "Don't go to America, Baroness. You are too ill and could die there." (*To Dr. Ziersen.*) Doctor Ziersen, I'm three thousand years old. I have dined with Socrates. No! I have set my heart on America. I will not die there.

(*To audience.*) The trouble is, I'm on the verge of what is generally known as "going to the dogs." Soon it will be too late to go anywhere else. A fatalism pursues me, sometimes demonic. I *must* get to America before I am overtaken.

I see Orion the Hunter is tracking the stars as usual. And is that Venus? My darling brother Thomas would know. "The bright and morning star," Tommy calls it—after Revelation. Yesterday, Clara asked me why I step out

here every night, then go to my room and shut the door.
(*As Clara.*) You've been doing it for years, Tanne. What does it signify? (*To Clara.*) I'm looking southeast toward Africa, Clara, where half of me lies in the Ngong Hills.
(*To Denys.*) Goodnight, Denys.

(*Walking back to the room and discarding the cape.*
LIGHT returns to normal.)

KAREN. (*To audience.*) And when I come in here and shut the door, it is to look at the map of my farm in Kenya ... (*Picking up Denys's picture.*) ... and to touch this. My friend, Denys Finch Hatton. The Honorable Denys Finch Hatton. Denys called me Tania. I am so fortunate to have realized my ideal in him. It is exactly forty-one years ago that I walked into Muthaiga Club in Nairobi and came face-to-face for the first time with this extraordinary hunter. That such a beautiful man existed, I had never dared believe. (*SHE packs Denys's picture. To audience member.*) Is it possible, I wonder, for a woman to live on passion alone? Or would it burn out your heart in time? Does anyone know? (*Gazing in mirror.*) Do you?

(*Tivoli MUSIC.*)

KAREN.
O foolish Pierrot,
If love burned your lips
Like some bold coquette,
Would you pirouette?
Dance a menuet?

Sing a chansonnette?

(*Singing.*) Plaisir d'amour

Ne dure quand moment.

(*MUSIC out. SHE pulls out another gown from the armoire.*)

KAREN. When I'm in New York, I'm going to Harlem to hear jazz. I also want to meet the film actress, Marilyn Monroe. After my commitment to the Foundation is fulfilled, I'd like to go to the state called Wisconsin to look for my father's cabin. Frydenlund, he named it. Happy Grove. (*SHE unfolds a large map on the desk.*) As a young man, Father sailed to North America. I found his old map this morning, and traced his journey all the way to that village with the exotic name. What was it? (*Finding it on map.*) Oshkosh! Father's cabin was near Oshkosh, on a bluff where Wolf River and Swamp Creek meet. He lived by a Chippewa encampment, which explains why there are a good many blue-eyed Chippewa. He fished and trapped and shot ducks. He even baked his own bread. My father could do anything.

Aunt Christentze maintained that Father fled to America in grief over the death of his beautiful cousin Agnes Frijs. Auntie believed that when Father committed suicide twenty-five years later, it was still over Agnes. I know why Father hanged himself from the rafters, though I never speak of it. (*SHE looks closely at a gown, then opens the other armoire door. Inside is a chart with the names of her outfits. SHE checks the columns.*) Beau Brummel, Beau Brummel—ah. No, I don't think I'll take it with me. Very

chic, but it says here—I've been photographed in it twice. (*SHE sits on the pillows, removing and folding the Pierrot pants. SHE wears slacks underneath.*) Many years ago, when I lived on my farm in Africa, I generally wore old khaki slacks stained with oil, mud and fouling. Once—wearing these old clothes—I wore my pearl earrings as well. I looked so unfeminine, that a Kikuyu referred to me as “that small bwana with white stones in his ears.”

When Edward, Prince of Wales—the future king of England—came to Nairobi for a visit, I hadn't been to Europe for four years and had no idea what the fashions were. So I wrote Pacquin's in Paris, which had my measurements, and asked them to make me a gown in silver brocade with a hooped skirt of great fullness. I called it Coronation.

(*SHE stands. Rhythmic, percussive SOUNDS of Africa fade in.*)

KAREN. The fateful Friday arrived, November 28, 1928, and the Prince came to dine with me at the farm. Afterwards, a big Ngoma was held, the ritual dance of harvest. That night there were three thousand natives by my house. The moon was full. There was no breath of wind. A great ring of naked dancers jumped up and down, heads thrown back, feet stamping the ground. With swinging of spears, with deadly, monotonous pulse—their red-chalked faces took on an expression of angelic ecstasy. It was a fine Ngoma. I have seen no finer anywhere.

(*SOUNDS OUT.*)

KAREN. Afterward, the Kikuyu elders came to see me. The chief was their spokesman—my friend Kinanjui—a courtly old man in a cape of blue monkey skins. (*As Kikuyu Chief.*) Msabu, we think that on the night when the Toto a Soldani came here to see our young men and virgins dance, among the Msabus present you had on the nicest frock. It pleased our hearts, Msabu. For we all believe that every day on the farm, you are terribly badly dressed. (*Another gown.*) Boheme. It's never been worn. I've been saving it several years for a certain prestigious event in Stockholm. But it hasn't left the closet yet, and now I don't think it ever will. When Mr. Ernest Hemingway accepted his Nobel Prize, he told the judges, "Isak Dinesen should have been considered before me." I'm sure they didn't appreciate his advice. (*SHE finds a gold turban and puts it on.*) Halo. I'm excited to be journeying to America for the first time. My earliest motto in life was, "Navigare necesse est vivere non necesse"—to set sail somewhere is more important than life itself. So I'm setting sail again. (*Sitting in armoire again.*) Of course, I'll miss Rungstedlund, but it's only for three months. Everything here gathers itself around me, and from day to day I feel as if my mother were sharing in every part of my life. Last night I dreamed about her again, the same dream. I am running on the path through the glade, and when I emerge from the trees, I see her—(*Moved.*) No. I cannot speak of it. To return to your mother and feel her arms around you is a dream that haunts you till you die. (*SHE opens a drawer in the armoire.*) I mustn't forget my fascinator. It's snowing in New York. (*SHE pulls out a*

dark woolen scarf.) Oh, and my scarf. (*Draping it about her neck.*) It seems to get longer every year. (*SHE uncovers a shawl and takes it out.*) And my Somali shawl which I brought back from Africa. (*Back to the scarf.*) Aunt Bess knit this for me during the German occupation. It was three and a half feet long and extravagantly wide. Now it's six feet long and extravagantly narrow. (*Putting scarf around neck.*) Aunt Bess and my mother, Ingeborg, were sisters. Aunt Bess was one year younger, and the true matriarch of our family. Mary Bess Westenholz. (*SHE pulls out an album and displays a picture of Aunt Bess.*) She never married. She moved here three years before I was born and stayed for sixty years. Every inch a conservative, militant Unitarian and outspoken suffragette. "Tanne," she once barked at me, "you're entirely too frivolous, just like your father's sisters. They're capricious beyond words. Scandinavian girls are in danger of corruption by atheism and free love. And it's all the fault of men. I myself do not hold sacred a pair of stupid trousers. It is my practice never to importune a man for anything, even when I say The Lord's Prayer." (*To Aunt Bess.*) What do you mean, Aunt Bess? (*As Aunt Bess.*) I mean: "You give us our daily bread! You lead us not into temptation! You deliver us from evil!" Always let the man know who's boss. You see? (*Crossing to stage right with shawl. SHE wraps herself in it. To audience.*) The Somalis have such elegant taste. My most trusted servant in Africa was a Somali, and a Mohammedan. His name was Farah Aden. When I think back on the episodes of my life there, his figure, straight, candid, and very fine to look at, stands as doorkeeper to all of them. My husband-to-be sent Farah to meet me in Aden

in 1913. I was on my way to Mombasa to marry my cousin, the Swedish Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke, and live in the highlands of Kenya on a coffee farm of forty-five hundred acres, financed by Mother's family.

For almost eighteen years, Farah ran my house, my stables and safaris. I talked to him about my worries and about my successes, and he knew of all that I did or thought. He was my best friend. (*SHE removes the turban and puts it in a hatbox. Then SHE turns to a photograph on the desk. To audience.*) This shows me all decked out at the castle at Wedellsborg. See the satin gloves? They stretched right up to the armpits. Pelleas and Melisande. Clara calls ... (*SHE pauses and looks offstage. Whispering.*) Clara calls gloves Right and Left, but that's too general. (*SHE crosses and opens the armoire drawer.*) These kid gloves are Tristan and Isolde. And here, these lace ones are Iphigenie and ... oh, you know the opera. Did she have a mate? Or was it her brother? Well, let's call him Max. Iphigenie and Max. (*Crossing, SHE puts the gloves in the trunk.*) Aunt Bess wouldn't have named one solitary thing after a man. She despaired over the men in Parliament, and criticized their indifferent handling of Denmark's defense. In 1909 she made the headlines by marching into the Lower House of Parliament in Session, shoving the doorman aside and seizing the bell from the chairman.

(*LIGHT change. SHE picks up a bell from the desk and furiously rings it.*)

KAREN. (*As Aunt Bess.*) You Danish men are nothing but pompous old fools! You sit here bartering away the welfare of our country! Well, I'm here to tell you that the women of Denmark despise you and brand you as a bunch of lazy, loud-mouthed, do-nothing politicians who've betrayed the honor of your country!

(*LIGHT back to normal.*)

KAREN. (*To audience.*) The members were paralyzed. Not a word was spoken, except for the chairman, Anders Thomsen, who kept babbling, "She took my bell!" Anders never did get it back. Aunt Bess carried it home, and was too embarrassed to return it. (*SHE rings bell vigorously, then silences it suddenly. To Clara.*) Oh, yes, Clara, I'm all right. I was just practicing for the New Year. (*SHE exchanges the turban for a large hat with swooping feathers.*) Albatross. (*As if at court.*) Queen Victoria, I presume? The name is Baroness von Blixen-Finecke. Your Highness. (*A curtsy. To audience.*) I admit, I'm one of God's chosen snobs. Unfortunately, my husband, the Baron, was not. (*SHE painfully straightens up from the curtsy. SHE winces and touches her spine.*) Oh, it's nothing. It will pass.

A year after my arrival in Africa, I learned that Bror was involved with Masai women, which explains why there are a good many blue-eyed Masai. I learned of Bror's philandering too late. The flowering of Nemesis had begun inside me. (*SHE removes the shawl from her shoulders.*) In those days, mercury tablets were worthless. Even Dr. Erlich's magic bullet—salvarsan injections—in my case,

turned out to be a blank cartridge. So even though the disease reached a non-communicable stage, I was never cured. I felt as if a claw had grabbed my heart, as if I'd been shaken and tumbled by some wild animal. (*From the armoire, SHE wraps herself in a fox neck-piece and looks in the mirror.*) Beowulf. But the hat's wrong. (*Off with the hat.*) There are two things a woman can do in such a situation. Accept it or shoot the man. I didn't shoot Bror. Instead, I made a pact with Lucifer, God's rebellious lover. So love I God. The echo of God's voice ordering him from Heaven is Lucifer's hope in hell. I gave my soul to Lucifer. In return he promised to transmute my sorrow into tales the whole world would read. So you see, I'm Lucifer's child. And if it didn't sound so beastly, I might say that, the world being what it is, it was worth having syphilis just to be called "Baroness." (*SHE packs the hat in the trunk, drapes the fur over it, then sits on the chest at stage right.*) For a long time, I told the family I had a tropical disease. A good thing, too, with Aunt Bess officiating as the moral conscience of the clan. She disliked Bror from the start. (*SHE lights a cigarette in a holder, using a lighter.*) Granduncle Hansen would also have disliked Bror. Even though he lustily sired several children, he looked upon sexual matters with grim abhorrence. So, as the story goes, when his eldest son was stricken with certain embarrassing symptoms, he was summoned to Granduncle's study. (*As Granduncle.*) Have you been smitten in a loathsome and abominable manner by the unspeakable disease which, if known to decent society, would consign you to the wretched ranks of disgusting untouchables who live in odious shame and degradation and

to whom no honorable person will ever speak again? Well? *(To audience.)* What my poor cousin had was an ulcer. The whole family had ulcers. *(SHE checks her watch.)* It will soon be midnight. There'll be celebrating down on the beach—young people seeing in the New Year. They shoot off firecrackers and honk their horns, and one may even fire a rifle over the Sound in the direction of Sweden. Sometimes there are fireworks. *(SHE puts out her cigarette and stands, looking across the stage into the armoire mirror.)* If only there were room in my luggage.

(Tivoli MUSIC.)

KAREN. *(As Pierrot.)*
Glad would I be, O Columbine,
Bright passion of my heart,
That, giving you the stars of heaven,
I might be given in return
A little glance from your imperial eye,
A little touch from your imperial hand,
A little dream before we say goodbye.

(SHE gathers up the Pierrot hat and ruff and puts them in the open trunk.)

KAREN. Pierrot, you heartsick fool, you're going to America, if I have to pack you under Tove's bloomers.

(The cuckoo CLOCK sounds the half hour. SHE removes and folds the Pierrot smock, putting it in the trunk.)

SHE is wearing a long-sleeved silk blouse with high neck.)

KAREN. This old German clock is like the one I had at Mbogani House in Kenya. I sold it when I lost the farm.

In the African Highlands, a clock is entirely an object of luxury. All the year round you can tell time from the position of the sun. But at Mbogani just before the impudent cuckoo flung open its little door to announce the hour in a clear, insolent voice, a wonderful thing happened ... *(Sitting at the desk, SHE finds a small paper bag.)* What's this? *(Dumping out its contents.)* Oh, Clara bought new toiletries for the trip. Glycerin soap, tooth powder, comb, toothbrush—but she got blue. I wanted red.

(SHE tosses the new toothbrush into the waste basket. Delicate MUSIC of Africa fades in. LIGHT change.)

KAREN. Anyway, what happened was—just before the cuckoo appeared, Native children came from everywhere. I could see them approaching the house from all sides, at the tails of their goats, which they dared not leave behind. The heads of the children and of the goats swam through the bush and long grass like heads of frogs in a pond.

They left their flocks on the lawn and came in noiselessly on bare feet. The bigger ones were about ten years and the youngest two. They didn't touch anything, nor sit down, nor speak. As the cuckoo rushed out at them, a movement of ecstasy and suppressed laughter ran through the group.

One small Kikuyu herdboys, Wawerru, would come back in the early morning by himself, stand for a long time in front of the clock and address it in Kikuyu in a slow sing-song declaration of love. "Nanini nyoni, nanini nyoni, nanini nyoni."

(MUSIC out. LIGHT to normal.)

KAREN. Farah laughed at him. *(To Farah.)* But, Farah, you've stood and waited for the cuckoo. I've seen you. *(As Farah.)* Memsahib, I watch only ten or four times, maybe none at all. But the Kikuyu they believe the bird is alive. They talk to it. The Kikuyu are a stupid people. Kikuyu cuckoo. *(To Farah.)* Yes, Farah. *(SHE finds a bulky fur coat and puts it on. To audience.)* I'll wear this on the plane. Ursa Minor. Some poor old bear from Finland, I suppose. I wore it in Rome last autumn. Well, as long as I have furs, I must wear them. But I'll never buy another. It seems an arrogant use of animals, and is even—I believe—a kind of cosmic disrespect. *(SHE looks around the room.)* I can't find my beauty box. I know it's here. It has all my new cosmetics. *(Finding them.)* Ah! Right under my nose. *(SHE takes the makeup case to the desk, opens it and puts on a makeup scarf. SHE powders her face.)* I don't approve of modern cosmetics. Too garish. A ghostly pallor is far more chic, a thespian mask of mystery. It gives an ethereal quality to a woman. After Grandmother Westenholz became senile, the color drained from her face so totally—we called her Moonbeam. *(To Grandmother.)* Good morning, Moonbeam, did you eat your prunes like a good girl? *(To audience.)* When Cousin Daisy came for a visit, she tiptoed

into her room. "Excuse me, but I'm looking for a Moonbeam."

"Here I am!" shrieked Grandmother. (*Applying lipstick. Singing.*)

Brown eyes, why are you blue?

Brown eyes, what can I do?

(*SHE opens the jar of kohl and applies it to her eyes.*)

KAREN. My Egyptian beauty secrets. The first is white powder. Then dark crimson lipstick. The third is kohl around the eyes. Kohl is far superior to manufactured eye pencils. It's made from an age-old compound called antimony. One day Tove watched me doing this. (*As Tove.*) What's that, Karen? (*To Tove.*) It's called kohl. (*As Tove.*) You mean the stuff they burn in stoves? (*To Tove.*) No, Tove, that's C-O-A-L. This is K-O-H-L. It was used by Cleopatra. It's very exotic. It's made from antimony. Do you know what antimony is? (*As Tove.*) Yes. It's the money men pay their ex-wives. (*SHE finishes her eyes. To audience.*) As for Egyptian beauty secret number four, my lips are sealed. (*Closing case and putting it back.*) I hope Tove's presence on the trip won't prove to be a mistake. She doesn't fool me. She's going for one reason and one reason only—to have a good time. She doesn't give a damn about my stories.

Had I a nephew who was still a child, I'd take him with me. I've always had a predilection for boys. The strong sex reaches its highest point of loveliness at the age of twelve to seventeen not to get it back in a second flowering till the age of seventy to ninety. (*SHE sits on the chest.*)

"Tore," I once said to my brother Tommy's boy, "how would you like me to buy you a tattoo for Christmas?" Every young man should have a tattoo. Naturally, the lad was enthusiastic. That is, until he told his parents. His mother Jonna is quite liberal, but not Tommy. I feel sorry for him. And we used to be so close. When Tommy was thirteen and I was twenty, he was so proud to be able to teach me about astronomy. (*As Thomas.*) Look, Tanne! Capella and Cassiopeia—and that strange star Algol. See how it pulses! (*To audience.*) Tommy introduced me to the sky. I introduced him to Shakespeare and to the temerity of believing in nothing. And to Africa. Tommy came to see me in Kenya twice. The first time for two years. My brother, my friend, my confidante. Now we're at odds with each other about everything. "Tanne," he said, "stop interfering in our children's lives. Tore is not going to be tattooed. Stop filling his head with your impossible ideas."

(SHE drops off the fur coat, goes to the ice bucket by the desk and pours herself a glass.)

KAREN. To the New Year, to New York, to new life, to new moons, to new worlds, to new everything. (*Drinking.*) Dr. Ziersen says I'm not to drink any alcoholic beverage. (*As Dr. Ziersen, slowly.*) Baroness, I must insist. It's poison to your delicate system. Abstinence is the watchword. (*To Dr. Ziersen.*) Dr. Ziersen, I can't agree more. Abstinence is a most wise thing ... (*To audience.*) ... when practiced in moderation. I never argue with Dr. Ziersen. It's too arduous. He speaks so slowly, I can't follow him.

Champagne, grapes and oysters. That's my diet. Strangely, I'm unaffected by champagne. Oh, after several glasses, perhaps. In Africa, Bror drank a bottle of gin a day and never showed it. On opening each new bottle, he'd say with great gravity, "Life is life, and fun is fun, but it's all so quiet when the goldfish die." (*Crossing to the armoire.*) What that means is anybody's guess. At the Muthaiga Club, Bror had everyone believing it was the riddle of the universe. It sounded so inscrutably wise in the cocktail bar, where he and his cronies met regularly. "It's all so quiet when the goldfish die."

Fish-balls. (*SHE takes a leopard hat from the armoire.*) One of my African trophies. Mosaic. In my Kenya days, I couldn't wait till I'd killed specimens of the Big Five—lion, elephant, rhino, Cape buffalo and leopard. One day I killed forty-four animals with a hundred cartridges. The Natives called me Lioness Blixen. I look back on the safaris of my youth, with the dogs and the happy breathless boys around me, seeing a herd of elephant pacing as if they had an appointment at the end of the world. I wish I could relive safari with Bror, but without carnage. (*Putting hat back, SHE sits in the armoire and takes up the album again.*) There's a picture of Bror with me in here—in 1914—with two lions we shot. I remember thrusting this in his face and saying, "Bror, I'm no longer this person. I've changed. Why haven't you?" (*As Bror.*) Why should I change? Hunting is my life. (*To Bror.*) But you're poaching ivory to pay off drinking debts, and leaving the carcasses to rot. (*As Bror.*) Oh, stop preaching. You're worse than Aunt Bess. No wonder the women here don't like you. The Commissioner's wife thinks you're a queer

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