WINE IN THE WILDERNESS

BY ALICE CHILDRESS

★

A COMEDY-DRAMA

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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

WINE IN THE WILDERNESS was first presented by Television Station WGBH in Boston, Massachusetts, on March 4, 1969, as the first play in a series "On Being Black" under a Ford Foundation Grant. It was produced by Luther James and directed by George Bass. The set was designed by Perry Watkins. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

BILL	Israel Hicks
OLDTIMER	John Marriott
SONNY-MAN	Cashmere Ellis
CYNTHIA	Marilyn Berry
TOMMY	Abbey Lincoln
NEIGHBOR	Francine Mills

CHARACTERS

BILL JAMESON ..... An artist aged thirty-three.

OLDTIMER ..... An old roustabout character in his sixties.

SONNY-MAN ..... A writer aged twenty-seven

CYNTHIA ..... A social worker aged twenty-five. She is Sonny-man's wife.

TOMMY ..... A woman factory worker aged thirty.

TIME: The Summer of 1964. NIGHT OF A RIOT.

PLACE: Harlem, New York City, New York, U.S.A.

Wine in the Wilderness

SCENE: *A one room apartment in a Harlem Tenement. It used to be a three room apartment but the tenant has broken out walls and is half finished with a redecorating job. The place is now only partly reminiscent of its past tawdry days, plaster broken away and lathing exposed right next to a new brick-faced portion of wall. The kitchen is now a part of the room. There is a three-quarter bed covered with an African throw, a screen is placed at the foot of the bed to insure privacy when needed. The room is obviously black dominated, pieces of sculpture, wall hangings, paintings. An artist's easel is standing with a drapery thrown across it so the empty canvas beneath it is hidden. Two other canvases the same size are next to it, they too are covered and conceal paintings. The place is in a beautiful, rather artistic state of disorder. The room also reflects an interest in other darker peoples of the world . . . A Chinese incense-burner Buddha, an American Indian feathered war helmet, a Mexican serape, a Japanese fan, a West Indian travel poster. There is a kitchen table, chairs, floor cushions, a couple of box crates, books, bookcases, plenty of artist's materials. There is a small raised platform for model posing. On the platform is a backless chair.*
The tail end of a riot is going on out in the street. Noise and screaming can be heard in the distance, . . . running feet, voices shouting over loudspeakers.

OFFSTAGE VOICES. Offa the street! Into your homes! Clear the street! (*The whine of a bullet is heard.*) Cover that roof! It's from the roof! (*Bill is seated on the floor with his back to the wall, drawing on a large sketch pad with charcoal pencil. He is very absorbed in his task but flinches as he hears the bullet sound, ducks and shields his head with upraised hand, . . . then resumes sketch-*

ing. The telephone rings, he reaches for phone with caution, pulls it toward him by the cord in order to avoid going near window or standing up.)

BILL. Hello? Yeah, my phone is on. How the hell I'm gonna be talkin' to you if it's not on? (*Sound of glass breaking in the distance.*) I could lose my damn life answerin' the phone. Sonny-man, what the hell you callin' me up for! I thought you and Cynthia might be downstairs dead. I banged on the floor and hollered down the air-shaft, no answer. No stuff! Thought yall was dead. I'm sittin' here drawin' a picture in your memory. In a bar! Yall sittin' in a bar? See there, you done blew the picture that's in your memory . . . No kiddin' , they wouldn't let you in the block? Man, they can't keep you outta your own house. Found? You found who? Model? What model? Yeah, yeah, thanks, . . . but I like to find my own models. No! Don't bring nobody up here in the middle of a riot . . . Hey, Sonny-man! Hey! (*Sound of yelling and rushing footsteps in the hall.*)

WOMAN'S VOICE. (*Offstage.*) Damnit, Bernice! The riot is over! What you hidin' in the hall for? I'm in the house, your father's in the house, . . . and you out here hidin' in the hall!

GIRL'S VOICE. (*Offstage.*) The house might burn down!

BILL. Sonny-man, I can't hear you!

WOMAN'S VOICE. (*Offstage.*) If it do burn down, what the hell you gon' do, run off and leave us to burn up by ourself? The riot is over. The police say it's over! Get back in the house! (*Sound of running feet and a knock on the door.*)

BILL. They say it's over. Man, they oughta let you on your own block, in your own house . . . Yeah, we still standin', this seventy year old house got guts. Thank you, yeah, thanks but I like to pick my own models. You drunk? Can't you hear when I say not to . . . Okay, all right, bring her . . . (*Frantic knocking at the door.*) I gotta go. Yeah, yeah, bring her. I gotta go . . . (*Hangs up phone and opens the door for Oldtimer. The old man is carrying a haul of loot . . . two or three bottles of liquor, a ham, a salami and a suit with price tags attached.*) What's this! Oh, no, no, no, Oldtimer, not here. . . . (*Faint sound of a police whistle.*) The police after you? What you bring that stuff in here for?

OLDTIMER. (*Runs past Bill to C. as he looks for a place to hide the loot.*) No, no, they not really after me but . . . I was in the basement so I could stash this stuff, . . . but a fella told me they

pokin' round down there . . . in the back yard pokin' round . . . the police doin' a lotta pokin' round.

BILL. If the cops are searchin' why you wanna dump your troubles on me?

OLDTIMER. I don't wanta go to jail. I'm too old to go to jail. What we gonna do?

BILL. We can throw it the hell outta the window. Didn't you think of just throwin it away and not worry 'bout jail?

OLDTIMER. I can't do it. It's like . . . I'm Oldtimer but my hands and arms is somebody else that I don' know-a-tall. (*Bill pulls stuff out of Oldtimer's arms and places loot on the kitchen table. Oldtimer's arms fall to his sides.*) Thank you, son.

BILL. Stealin' ain't worth a bullet through your brain, is it? You wanna get shot down and drown in your own blood, . . . for what? A suit, a bottle of whiskey? Gonna throw your life away for a damn ham?

OLDTIMER. But I ain' really stole nothin', Bill, cause I ain' no thief. Them others, . . . they smash the windows, they run in the stores and grab and all. Me, I pick up what they left scatter in the street. Things they drop . . . things they trample underfoot. What's in the street ain' like stealin'. This is leavin's. What I'm gon' do if the police come?

BILL. (*Starts to gather the things in the tablecloth that is on the table.*) I'll throw it out the air-shaft window.

OLDTIMER. (*Places himself squarely in front of the air-shaft window.*) I be damn. Uh-uh, can't let you do it, Billy-Boy. (*Grabs the liquor and holds on.*)

BILL. (*Wraps the suit, the ham and the salami in the tablecloth and ties the ends together in a knot.*) Just for now, then you can go down and get it later.

OLDTIMER. (*Getting belligerent.*) I say I ain' gon' let you do it.

BILL. Sonny-man calls this "The people's revolution." A revolution should not be looting and stealing. Revolutions are for liberation. (*Oldtimer won't budge from before the window.*) Okay, man, you win, it's all yours. (*Walks away from Oldtimer and prepares his easel for sketching.*)

OLDTIMER. Don't be mad with me, Billy-Boy, I couldn' help myself.

BILL. (*At peace with the old man.*) No hard feelin's.

OLDTIMER. (*As he uncorks bottle.*) I don't blame you for bein' fed up with us, . . . fella like you oughta be fed up with your people sometime. Hey, Billy, let's you and me have a little taste together.

BILL. Yeah, why not.

OLDTIMER. (*At table pouring drinks.*) You mustn't be too hard on me. You see, you talented, you got somethin' on the ball, you gonna make it on past these white folk, . . . but not me, Billy-boy, it's too late in the day for that. Time, time, time, . . . time done put me down. Father Time is a bad white cat. Whatcha been paintin' and drawin' lately? You can paint me again if you wanta, . . . no charge. Paint me 'cause that might be the only way I get to stay in the world after I'm dead and gone. Somebody'll look up at your paintin' and say, . . . "Who's that?" And you say, . . . "That's Oldtimer." (*Bill joins Oldtimer at table and takes one of the drinks.*) Well, here's lookin' at you and goin' down me. (*Gulps drink down.*)

BILL. (*Raising his glass.*) Your health, oldtimer.

OLDTIMER. My day we didn't have all this grants and scholarship like now. Whatcha been doin'?

BILL. I'm working on the third part of a triptych.

OLDTIMER. A what tick?

BILL. A triptych.

OLDTIMER. Hot-damn, that call for another drink. Here's to the trip-tick. Down the hatch. What is one-a-those?

BILL. It's three paintings that make one work . . . three paintings that make one subject.

OLDTIMER. Goes together like a new outfit . . . hat, shoes and suit.

BILL. Right. The title of my triptych is . . . "Wine In The Wilderness" . . . Three canvases on black womanhood. . . .

OLDTIMER. (*Eyes light up.*) Are they naked pitchers?

BILL. (*Crosses to paintings.*) No, all fully clothed.

OLDTIMER. (*Wishing it was a naked picture.*) Man, ain' nothin' dirty 'bout naked pitchers. That's art. What you call artistic.

BILL. Right, right, right, but these are with clothes. That can be artistic too. (*Uncovers one of the canvases and reveals painting of a charming little girl in Sunday dress and hair ribbon.*) I call her . . . "Black girlhood."

OLDTIMER. Awwwww, that's innocence! Don't know what it's

all about. Ain't that the little child that live right down the street? Yeah. That call for another drink.

BILL. Slow down, Oldtimer, wait till you see this. (*Covers the painting of the little girl, then uncovers another canvas and reveals a beautiful woman, deep mahogany complexion; she is cold but utter perfection, draped in startling colors of African material, very "Vogue" looking. She wears a golden head-dress sparkling with brilliants and sequins applied over the paint.*) There she is . . . "Wine In The Wilderness" . . . Mother Africa, regal, black womanhood in her noblest form.

OLDTIMER. Hot damn. I'd die for her, no stuff, . . . oh, man. "Wine In The Wilderness."

BILL. Once, a long time ago, a poet named Omar told us what a paradise life could be if a man had a loaf of bread, a jug of wine and . . . a woman singing to him in the wilderness. She is the woman, she is the bread, she is the wine, she is the singing. This Abyssinian maiden is paradise, . . . perfect black womanhood.

OLDTIMER. (*Pours for Bill and himself.*) To our Abyssinian maiden.

BILL. She's the Sudan, the Congo River, the Egyptian Pyramids . . . Her thighs are African Mahogany . . . she speaks and her words pour forth sparkling clear as the waters . . . Victoria Falls.

OLDTIMER. Ow! Victoria Falls! She got a pretty name.

BILL. (*Covers her up again.*) Victoria Falls is a waterfall not her name. Now, here's the one that calls for a drink. (*Snatches cover from the empty canvas.*)

OLDTIMER. (*Stunned by the empty canvas.*) Your . . . your pitcher is gone.

BILL. Not gone, . . . she's not painted yet. This will be the third part of the triptych. This is the unfinished third of "Wine In The Wilderness." She's gonna be the kinda chick that is grass roots, . . . no, not grass roots, . . . I mean she's underneath the grass roots. The lost woman, . . . what the society has made out of our women. She's as far from my African queen as a woman can get and still be female, she's as close to the bottom as you can get without crackin' up . . . she's ignorant, unfeminine, coarse, rude . . . vulgar . . . a poor, dumb chick that's had her behind kicked until it's numb . . . and the sad part is . . . she ain't together, you know, . . . there's no hope for her.

OLDTIMER. Oh, man, you talkin' 'bout my first wife.

BILL. A chick that ain' fit for nothin' but to . . . to . . . just pass her by.
OLDTIMER. Yeah, later for her. When you see her, cross over to the other side of the street.
BILL. If you had to sum her up in one word it would be nothin'!
OLDTIMER. (*Roars with laughter.*) That call for a double!
BILL. (*Beginning to slightly feel the drinks. He covers the canvas again.*) Yeah, that's a double! The kinda woman that grates on your damn nerves. And Sonny-man just called to say he found her runnin' round in the middle-a this riot, Sonny-man say she's the real thing from underneath them grass roots. A back-country chick right outta the wilds of Mississippi, . . . but she ain' never been near there. Born in Harlem, raised right here in Harlem, . . . but back country. Got the picture?
OLDTIMER. (*Full of laughter.*) When . . . when . . . when she get here let's us stomp her to death.
BILL. Not till after I paint her. Gonna put her right here on this canvas. (*Pats the canvas, walks in a strut around the table.*) When she gets put down on canvas, . . . then triptych will be finished.
OLDTIMER. (*Joins him in the strut.*) Trip-tick will be finish . . . trip-tick will be finish . . .
BILL. Then "Wine In The Wilderness" will go up against the wall to improve the view of some post office . . . or some library . . . or maybe a bank . . . and I'll win a prize . . . and the queen, my black queen will look down from the wall so the messed up chicks in the neighborhood can see what a woman oughta be . . . and the innocent child on one side of her and the messed up chick on the other side of her . . . MY STATEMENT.
OLDTIMER. (*Turning the strut into a dance.*) Wine in the wilderness . . . up against the wall . . . wine in the wilderness . . . up against the wall . . .
WOMAN FROM UPSTAIRS APT. (*Offstage.*) What's the matter! The house on fire?
BILL. (*Calls upstairs through the air-shaft window.*) No, baby! We down here paintin' pictures! (*Sound of police siren in distance.*)
WOMAN FROM UPSTAIRS APT. (*Offstage.*) So much-a damn noise! Cut out the noise! (*To her husband, hysterically.*) Percy! Percy! You hear a police siren! Percy! That a fire engine?!

BILL. Another messed up chick. (*Gets a rope and ties it to Oldtimer's bundle.*) Got an idea. We'll tie the rope to the bundle, . . . then . . . (*Lowers bundle out of window.*) lower the bundle outta the window . . . and tie it to this nail here behind the curtain. Now! Nobody can find it except you and me . . . Cops come, there's no loot. (*Ties rope to nail under curtain.*)

OLDTIMER. Yeah, yeah, loot long gone 'til I want it. (*Makes sure window knot is secure.*) It'll be swingin' in the breeze free and easy. (*There is knocking on the door.*)

SONNY-MAN. Open up! Open up! Sonny-man and company.

BILL. (*Putting finishing touches on securing knot to nail.*) Wait, wait, hold on. . . .

SONNY-MAN. And-a here we come! (*Pushes the door open. Enters room with his wife Cynthia and Tommy. Sonny-man is in high spirits. He is in his late twenties, his wife Cynthia is a bit younger. She wears her hair in a natural style, her clothing is tweedy and in good, quiet taste. Sonny-man is wearing slacks and a dashiki over a shirt. Tommy is dressed in a mis-matched skirt and sweater, wearing a wig that is not comical, but is wiggy looking. She has the habit of smoothing it every once in a while, patting to make sure it's in place. She wears sneakers and bobby sox, carries a brown paper sack.*)

CYNTHIA. You didn't think it was locked, did you?

BILL. Door not locked? (*Looking over Tommy.*)

TOMMY. You oughta run him outta town, pushin' open people's door.

BILL. Come right on in.

SONNY-MAN. (*Standing behind Tommy and pointing down at her to draw Bill's attention.*) Yes, sireeeeee.

CYNTHIA. Bill, meet a friend-a ours . . . This is Miss Tommy Fields. Tommy, meet a friend-a ours . . . this is Bill, Jameson . . . Bill, Tommy.

BILL. Tommy, if I may call you that . . .

TOMMY. (*Likes him very much.*) Help yourself, Bill. It's a pleasure. Bill Jameson, well, all right.

BILL. The pleasure is all mine. Another friend-a ours, Oldtimer.

TOMMY. (*With respect and warmth.*) How are you, Mr. Timer?

BILL. (*Laughs along with others, Oldtimer included.*) What you call him, baby?

TOMMY. Mr. Timer, . . . ain't that what you say? (*They all laugh expansively.*)
BILL. No, sugar pie, that's not his name, . . . we just say . . . "Oldtimer," that's what everybody call him. . . .
OLDTIMER. Yeah, they all call me that . . . everybody say that . . . OLDTIMER.
TOMMY. That's cute, . . . but what's your name?
BILL. His name *is* . . . er . . . er . . . What *is* your name?
SONNY-MAN. Dog-bite, what's your name, man? (*There is a significant moment of self-consciousness as Cynthia, Sonny and Bill realize they don't know Oldtimer's name.*)
OLDTIMER. Well, it's . . . Edmond L. Matthews.
TOMMY. Edmond £. Matthews. What's the L for?
OLDTIMER. Lorenzo, . . . Edmond Lorenzo Matthews.
BILL AND SONNY-MAN. Edmond Lorenzo Matthews.
TOMMY. Pleased to meetcha, Mr. Matthews.
OLDTIMER. Nobody call me that in a long, long time.
TOMMY. I'll call you Oldtimer like the rest but I like to know who I'm meetin'. (*Oldtimer gives her a chair.*) There you go. He's a gentleman too. Bet you can tell my feet hurt. I got one corn, . . . and that one is enough. Oh, it'll ask you for somethin'. (*General laughter. Bill indicates to Sonny-man that Tommy seems right. Cynthia and Oldtimer take seats near Tommy.*)
BILL. You rest yourself, baby, er . . . er . . . Tommy. You did say Tommy.
TOMMY. I cut it to Tommy . . . Tommy-Marie, I use both of 'em sometime.
BILL. How 'bout some refreshment?
SONNY-MAN. Yeah, how 'bout that. (*Pouring drinks.*)
TOMMY. Don't yall carry me too fast, now.
BILL. (*Indicating liquor bottles.*) I got what you see and also some wine . . . couple-a cans-a beer.
TOMMY. I'll take the wine.
BILL. Yeah, I knew it.
TOMMY. Don't wanta start nothin' I can't keep up. (*Oldtimer slaps his thigh with pleasure.*)
BILL. That's all right, baby, you just a wine-o.
TOMMY. You the one that's got the wine, not me.
BILL. I use this for cookin'.

TOMMY. You like to get loaded while you cook? (*Oldtimer is having a ball.*)
BILL. (*As he pours wine for Tommy.*) Oh, baby, you too much.
OLDTIMER. (*Admiring Tommy.*) Oh, Lord, I wish, I wish, I wish I was young again.
TOMMY. (*Flirtatiously.*) Lively as you are, . . . I don't know what we'd do with you if you got any younger.
OLDTIMER. Oh, hush now!
SONNY-MAN. (*Whispering to Bill and pouring drinks.*) Didn't I tell you! Know what I'm talkin' about. You dig? All the elements, man.
TOMMY. (*Worried about what the whispering means.*) Let's get somethin' straight. I didn't come bustin' in on the party, . . . I was asked. If you married and any wives or girl-friends round here . . . I'm innocent. Don't wanta get shot at, or jumped on. Cause I wasn't doin' a thing but mindin' my business! . . . (*Saying the last in loud tones to be heard in other rooms.*)
OLDTIMER. Jus' us here, that's all.
BILL. I'm single, baby. Nobody wants a poor artist.
CYNTHIA. Oh, honey, we wouldn't walk you into a jealous wife or girl friend.
TOMMY. You paint all-a these pitchers? (*Bill and Sonny-man hand out drinks.*)
BILL. Just about. Your health, baby, to you.
TOMMY. (*Lifts her wine glass.*) All right, and I got one for you. . . . Like my grampaw used-ta say, . . . Here's to the men's collars and the women's skirts, . . . may they never meet. (*General laughter.*)
OLDTIMER. But they ain't got far to go before they do.
TOMMY. (*Suddenly remembers her troubles.*) Niggers, niggers . . . niggers, . . . I'm sick-a niggers, ain't you? A nigger will mess up everytime . . . Lemmie tell you what the niggers done . . .
BILL. Tommy, baby, we don't use that word around here. We can talk about each other a little better than that.
CYNTHIA. Oh, she doesn't mean it.
TOMMY. What must I say?
BILL. Try Afro-Americans.
TOMMY. Well, . . . the Afro-Americans burnt down my house.
OLDTIMER. Oh, no they didn't!
TOMMY. Oh, yes they did . . . it's almost burn down. Then the

firemen nailed up my door . . . the door to my room, nailed up shut tight with all I got in the world.
OLDTIMER. Shame, what a shame.
TOMMY. A *damn* shame. My clothes . . . Everything gone. This riot blew my life. All I got is gone like it never was.
OLDTIMER. I know it.
TOMMY. My transistor radio . . . that's gone.
CYNTHIA. Ah, gee.
TOMMY. The transistor . . . and a brand new pair-a shoes I never had on one time . . . (*Raises her right hand.*) If I never move, that's the truth . . . new shoes gone.
OLDTIMER. Child, when hard luck fall it just keep fallin'.
TOMMY. And in my top dresser drawer I got a my-on-ase jar with forty-one dollars in it. The fireman would not let me in to get it . . . And it was a Afro-American fireman, don'tcha know.
OLDTIMER. And you ain't got no place to stay. (*Bill is studying her for portrait possibilities.*)
TOMMY. (*Rises and walks around room.*) That's a lie. I always got some place to go. I don't wanta boast but I ain't never been no place that I can't go back the second time. Woman I use to work for say . . . "Tommy, any time, any time you want a sleep-in place you come right here to me." . . . And that's Park Avenue, my own private bath and T.V. set . . . But I don't want that . . . so I make it on out here to the dress factory. I got friends . . . not a lot of 'em . . . but a few *good* ones. I call my friend—girl and her mother . . . they say . . . "Tommy, you come here, bring yourself over here." So Tommy got a roof with no sweat. (*Looks at torn walls.*) Looks like the Afro-Americans got to you too. Breakin' up, breakin' down, . . . that's all they know.
BILL. No, Tommy, . . . I'm re-decorating the place . . .
TOMMY. You mean you did this to yourself?
CYNTHIA. It's gonna be wild . . . brick-face walls . . . wall to wall carpet.
SONNY-MAN. She was breakin' up everybody in the bar . . . had us all laughin' . . . crackin' us up. In the middle of a riot . . . she's gassin' everybody!
TOMMY. No need to cry, it's sad enough. They hollerin' whitey, whitey . . . but who they burn out? Me.
BILL. The brothers and sisters are tired, weary of the endless get-no-where struggle.

TOMMY. I'm standin' there in the bar . . . tellin' it like it is . . . next thing I know they talkin' bout bringin' me to meet you. But you know what I say? Can't nobody pick nobody for nobody else. It don't work. And I'm standin' there in a mis-match skirt and top and these sneaker-shoes. I just went to put my dresses in the cleaner . . . Oh, Lord, wonder if they burn down the cleaner. Well, no matter, when I got back it was all over . . . They went in the grocery store, rip out the shelves, pull out all the groceries . . . the hams . . . the . . . the . . . the can goods . . . everything . . . and then set fire . . . Now who you think live over the grocery? Me, that's who. I don't even go to the store lookin' this way . . . but this would be the time, when . . . folks got a fella they want me to meet.

BILL. (*Suddenly self-conscious.*) Tommy, they thought . . . they thought I'd like to paint you . . . that's why they asked you over.

TOMMY. (*Pleased by the thought but she can't understand it.*) Paint me? For what? If he was gonna paint somebody seems to me it'd be one of the pretty girls they show in the beer ads. They even got colored on television now, . . . brushin' their teeth and smokin' cigarettes, . . . some of the prettiest girls in the world. He could get them, . . . couldn't you?

BILL. Sonny-man and Cynthia were right. I want to paint you.

TOMMY. (*Suspiciously.*) Naked, with no clothes on?

BILL. No, baby, dressed just as you are now.

OLDTIMER. Wearin' clothes is also art.

TOMMY. In the cleaner I got a white dress with a orlon sweater to match it, maybe I can get it out tomorrow and pose in that. (*Cynthia, Oldtimer and Sonny-man are eager for her to agree.*)

BILL. No, I will paint you today, Tommy, just as you are, holding your brown paper bag.

TOMMY. Mmmmmm, me holdin' the damn bag, I don' know 'bout that.

BILL. Look at it this way, tonight has been a tragedy.

TOMMY. Sure in hell has.

BILL. And so I must paint you tonight, . . . Tommy in her moment of tragedy.

TOMMY. I'm tired.

BILL. Damn, baby, all you have to do is sit there and rest.

TOMMY. I'm hongry.

SONNY-MAN. While you're posin' Cynthia can run down to our house and fix you some eggs.
CYNTHIA. (*Gives her husband a weary look.*) Oh, Sonny, that's such a lovely idea.
SONNY-MAN. Thank you, darlin', I'm in there, . . . on the beam.
TOMMY. (*Ill at ease about posing.*) I don't want no eggs. I'm goin' to find me some Chinee food.
BILL. I'll go. If you promise to stay here and let me paint you, . . . I'll get you anything you want.
TOMMY. (*Brightening up.*) Anything I want. Now, how he sound? All right, you comin' on mighty strong there. "Anything you want." When last you heard somebody say that? . . . I'm warnin' you, now, . . . I'm free, single and disengage, . . . so you better watch yourself.
BILL. (*Keeping her away from ideas of romance.*) Now this is the way the program will go down. First I'll feed you, then I'll paint you.
TOMMY. Okay, I'm game, I'm a good sport. First off, I want me some Chinee food.
CYNTHIA. Order up, Tommy, the treat's on him.
TOMMY. How come it is you never been married? All these girls runnin' round Harlem lookin' for husbands. (*To Cynthia.*) I don't blame 'em, 'cause I'm lookin' for somebody myself.
BILL. I've been married, married and divorced, she divorced me, Tommy, so maybe I'm not much of a catch.
TOMMY. Look at it this-a-way. Some folks got bad taste. That woman had bad taste. (*All laugh except Bill who pours another drink.*) Watch it, Bill, you gonna rust the linin' of your stomach. Ain't this a shame? The riot done wipe me out and I'm sittin' here havin' me a ball. Sittin' here ballin'! (*As Bill refills her glass.*) Hold it, that's enough. Likker ain' my problem.
OLDTIMER. I'm havin' me a good time.
TOMMY. Know what I say 'bout divorce. (*Slaps her hands together in a final gesture.*) Anybody don' wantcha, . . . later, let 'em go. That's bad taste for you.
BILL. Tommy, I don't wanta ever get married again. It's me and my work. I'm not gettin' serious about anybody. . . .
TOMMY. He's spellin' at me, now. Nigger, . . . I mean Afro-American . . . I ain' ask you nothin'. You hinkty, I'm hinkty too. I'm independent as a hog on ice, . . . and a hog on ice is dead,

cold, well-preserved . . . and don't need a mother-grabbin' thing. (*All laugh heartily except Bill and Cynthia.*) I know models get paid. I ain' no square but this is a special night and so this one'll be on the house. Show you my heart's in the right place.

BILL. I'll be glad to pay you, baby.

TOMMY. You don't really like me, do you? That's all right, sometime it happen that way. You can't pick for *nobody*. Friends get to matchin' up friends and they mess up everytime. Cynthia and Sonny-man done messed up.

BILL. I like you just fine and I'm glad and grateful that you came.

TOMMY. Good enough. (*Extends her hand. They slap hands together.*) You 'n me friends?

BILL. Friends, baby, friends. (*Putting rock record on.*)

TOMMY. (*Trying out the model stand.*) Okay, Dad! Let's see 'bout this *anything I want* jive. Want me a bucket-a Egg Foo Yong, and you get you a shrimp-fry rice, we split that and each have some-a both. Make him give you the soy sauce, the hot mustard and the duck sauce too.

BILL. Anything else, baby?

TOMMY. Since you ask, yes. If your money hold out, get me a double order egg roll. And a half order of the sweet and sour spare ribs.

BILL. (*To Oldtimer and Sonny-man.*) Come on, come on. I need some strong men to help me bring back your order, baby.

TOMMY. (*Going into her dance . . . simply standing and going through some boo-ga-loo motions.*) Better go get it 'fore I think up some more to go 'long with it. (*The men laugh and vanish out of the door. Steps heard descending stairs.*) Turn that off. (*Cynthia turns off record player.*) How could I forget your name, good as you been to me this day. Thank you, Cynthia, thank you. I *like* him. Oh, I *like* him. But I don't wanta push him too fast. Oh, I got to play these cards right.

CYNTHIA. (*A bit uncomfortable.*) Oh, Honey, . . . Tommy, you don't want a poor artist.

TOMMY. Tommy's not lookin' for a meal ticket. I been doin' for myself all my life. It takes two to make it in this high-price world. A black man see a hard way to go. The both of you gotta pull together. That way you accomplish.

CYNTHIA. I'm a social worker . . . and I see so many broken

homes. Some of these men! Tommy, don't be in a rush about the marriage thing.

TOMMY. Keep it to yourself, . . . but I was thirty my last birthday and haven't ever been married. I coulda been. Oh, yes, indeed, coulda been. But I don't want any and everybody. What I want with a no-good piece-a nothin'? I'll never forget what the Reverend Martin Luther King said . . . "I have a dream." I liked him sayin' it 'cause truer words have never been spoke. (*Straightening the room.*) I have a dream, too. Mine is to find a man who'll treat me just half-way decent . . . just to meet me half-way is all I ask, to smile, be kind to me. Somebody in my corner. Not to wake up by myself in the mornin' and face this world all alone.

CYNTHIA. About Bill, it's best not to ever count on anything, anything at all, Tommy.

TOMMY. (*This remark bothers her for a split second but she shakes it off.*) Of course, Cynthia, that's one of the foremost rules of life. Don't count on *nothin'!*

CYNTHIA. Right, don't be too quick to put your trust in these men.

TOMMY. You put your trust in one and got yourself a husband.

CYNTHIA. Well, yes, but what I mean is . . . Oh, you know. A man is a man and Bill is also an artist and his work comes before all else and there are other factors . . .

TOMMY. (*Sits facing Cynthia.*) What's wrong with me?

CYNTHIA. I don't know what you mean.

TOMMY. Yes you do. You tryin' to tell me I'm aimin' too high by lookin' at Bill.

CYNTHIA. Oh, no, my dear.

TOMMY. Out there in the street, in the bar, you and your husband were so sure that he'd *like* me and want to paint my picture.

CYNTHIA. But he does want to paint you, he's very eager to . . .

TOMMY. But why? Somethin' don't fit right.

CYNTHIA. (*Feeling sorry for Tommy.*) If you don't want to do it, just leave and that'll be that.

TOMMY. Walk out while he's buyin' me what I ask for, spendin' his money on me? That'd be too dirty. (*Looks at books. Takes one from shelf.*) Books, books, books everywhere. "Afro-American History." I like that. What's wrong with me, Cynthia? Tell me, I won't get mad with you, I swear. If there's somethin' wrong that I can change, I'm ready to do it. Eighth grade, that's all I had of

school. You a social worker, I know that mean college. I come from poor people. (*Examining the book in her hand.*) Talkin' 'bout poverty this and poverty that and studyin' it. When you *in* it you don' be studyin' 'bout it. Cynthia, I remember my mother tyin' up her stockin's with strips-a rag 'cause she didn't have no garters. When I get home from school she'd say, . . . "Nothin' much here to eat." Nothin' much might be grits, or bread and coffee. I got sick-a all that, got me a job. Later for school.

CYNTHIA. The Matriarchal Society.

TOMMY. What's that?

CYNTHIA. A Matriarchal Society is one in which the women rule . . . the women have the power . . . the women head the house.

TOMMY. We didn't have nothin' to rule over, not a pot nor a window. And my papa picked hisself up and run off with some finger-poppin' woman and we never hear another word 'til ten, twelve years later when a undertaker call up and ask if Mama wanta come claim his body. And don'cha know, mama went on over and claim it. A woman need a man to claim, even if it's a dead one. What's wrong with me? Be honest.

CYNTHIA. You're a fine person . . .

TOMMY. Go on, I can take it.

CYNTHIA. You're too brash. You're too used to looking out for yourself. It makes us lose our femininity . . . It makes us hard . . . it makes us seem very hard. We do for ourselves too much.

TOMMY. If I don't, who's gonna do for me?

CYNTHIA. You have to let the black man have his manhood again. You have to give it back, Tommy.

TOMMY. I didn't take it from him, how I'm gonna give it back? What else is the matter with me? You had school, I didn't. I respect that.

CYNTHIA. Yes, I've had it, the degree and the whole bit. For a time I thought I was about to move into another world, the so-called "integrated" world, a place where knowledge and know-how could set you free and open all the doors, but that's a lie. I turned away from that idea. The first thing I did was give up dating white fellas.

TOMMY. I never had none to give up. I'm not soundin' on you. White folks, nothin' happens when I look at 'em. I don't hate 'em, don't love 'em, . . . just nothin' shakes a-tall. The dullest people

in the world. The way they talk . . . "Oh, hooty, hooty, hoo" . . . Break it down for me to A, B, C's. That Bill . . . I like him, with his black, uppity, high-handed ways. What do you do to get a man you want? A social worker oughta tell you things like that.
CYNTHIA. Don't chase him . . . at least don't let it look that way. Let him pursue you.
TOMMY. What if he won't? Men don't chase me much, not the kind I like.
CYNTHIA. (*Rattles off instructions glibly.*) Let him do the talking. Learn to listen. Stay in the background a little. Ask his opinion . . . "What do *you* think, Bill?"
TOMMY. Mmmmm, "Oh, hooty, hooty, hoo."
CYNTHIA. But why count on him? There are lots of other nice guys.
TOMMY. You don't think he'd go for me, do you?
CYNTHIA. (*Trying to be diplomatic.*) Perhaps you're not really his type.
TOMMY. Maybe not, but he's mine. I'm so lonesome . . . I'm *lonesome* . . . I want somebody to love. Somebody to say . . . "That's all right," when the World treats me mean.
CYNTHIA. Tommy, I think you're too good for Bill.
TOMMY. I don't wanta hear that. The last man that told me I was too good for him . . . was tryin' to get away. He's good enough for me. (*Straightening room.*)
CYNTHIA. Leave the room alone. What we need is a little more sex appeal and a little less washing, cooking and ironing. (*Tommy puts down the room straightening.*) One more thing, . . . do you have to wear that wig?
TOMMY. (*A little sensitive.*) I like how *your* hair looks. But some of the naturals I don't like. Can see all the lint caught up in the hair like it hasn't been combed since know not when. You a Muslim?
CYNTHIA. No.
TOMMY. I'm just sick-a hair, hair, hair. Do it this way, don't do it, leave it natural, straighten it, process, no process. I get sick-a hair and talkin' 'bout it and foolin' with it. That's why I wear the wig.
CYNTHIA. I'm sure your own must be just as nice or nicer than that.
TOMMY. It oughta be. I only paid nineteen ninety five for this.

CYNTHIA. You ought to go back to usin' your own.
TOMMY. (*Tensely.*) I'll be givin' that some thought.
CYNTHIA. You're pretty nice people just as you are. Soften up, Tommy. You might surprise yourself.
TOMMY. I'm listenin'.
CYNTHIA. Expect more. Learn to let men open doors for you . . .
TOMMY. What if I'm standin' there and they don't open it?
CYNTHIA. (*Trying to level with her.*) You're a fine person. He wants to paint you, that's all. He's doing a kind of mural thing and we thought he would enjoy painting you. I'd hate to see you expecting more out of the situation than what's there.
TOMMY. Forget it, sweetie-pie, don' nothin' happen that's not suppose to. (*Sound of laughter in the hall. Bill, Oldtimer and Sonny-man enter.*)
BILL. No Chinese restaurant left, baby! It's wiped out. Gone with the revolution.
SONNY-MAN. (*To Cynthia.*) Baby, let's move, split the scene, get on with it, time for home.
BILL. The revolution is here. Whatta you do with her? You paint her!
SONNY-MAN. You write her . . . you write the revolution. I'm gonna write the revolution into a novel nine hundred pages long.
BILL. Dance it! Sing it! "Down in the cornfield Hear dat mournful sound . . . (*Sonny-man and Oldtimer harmonize.*) Dear old Massa am-a sleepin' A-sleepin' in the cold, cold ground." Now for "Wine In The Wilderness!" Triptych will be finished.
CYNTHIA. (*In Bill's face.*) "Wine In The Wilderness," huh? Exploitation!
SONNY-MAN. Upstairs, all out, come on, Oldtimer. Folks can't create in a crowd. Cynthia, move it, baby.
OLDTIMER. (*Starting toward the window.*) My things! I got a package.
SONNY-MAN. (*Heads him off.*) Up and out. You don't have to go home, but you have to get outta here. Happy paintin', yall. (*One backward look and they are all gone.*)
BILL. Whatta night, whatta night, whatta night, baby. It will be painted, written, sung and discussed for generations.
TOMMY. (*Notices nothing that looks like Chinese food. He is carrying a small bag and a container.*) Where's the Foo-Yong?

BILL. They blew the restaurant, baby. All I could get was a couple-a franks and a orange drink from the stand.
TOMMY. (*Jersely.*) You brought me a frank-footer? That's what you think-a me, a frank-footer?
BILL. Nothin' to do with what I think. Place is closed.
TOMMY. (*Quietly surly.*) This is the damn City-a New York, any hour on the clock they sellin' the chicken in the basket, barbecue ribs, pizza pie, hot pastrami samitches; and you brought me a frank-footer?
BILL. Baby, don't break bad over somethin' to eat. The smart set, the jet set, the beautiful people, kings and queens eat frankfurters.
TOMMY. If a queen sent you out to buy her a bucket-a Foo-yung, you wouldn't come back with no lonely-ass frank-footer.
BILL. Kill me 'bout it, baby! Go 'head and shoot me six times. That's the trouble with our women, yall always got your mind on food.
TOMMY. Is that our trouble? (*Laughs.*) Maybe you right. Only two things to do. Either eat the frankfooter or walk on outta here. You got any mustard?
BILL. (*Gets mustard from the refrigerator.*) Let's face it, our folks are not together. The brothers and sisters have busted up Harlem, . . . no plan, no nothin'. There's your black revolution, heads whipped, hospital full and we still in the same old bag.
TOMMY. (*Seated at the kitchen table.*) Maybe what everybody need is somebody like you, who know how things oughta go, to get on out there and start some action.
BILL. You still mad about the frankfurter?
TOMMY. No. I keep seein' pitchers of what was in my room and how it all must be spoiled now. (*Sips the orange drink.*) A orange never been near this. Well, it's cold. (*Looking at an incense burner.*) What's that?
BILL. An incense burner, was given to me by the Chinese guy, Richard Lee. I'm sorry they blew his restaurant.
TOMMY. Does it help you to catch the number?
BILL. No, baby, I just burn incense sometime.
TOMMY. For what?
BILL. Just 'cause I feel like it. Baby, ain't you used to nothin'?
TOMMY. Ain't used to burnin' incent for nothin'.
BILL. (*Laughs.*) Burnin' what?
TOMMY. That stuff.

BILL. What did you call it?
TOMMY. Incent.
BILL. It's not incent, baby. It's incense.
TOMMY. Like the sense you got in your head. In-sense. Thank you. You're a very correctable person, ain't you?
BILL. Let's put you on canvas.
TOMMY. (*Stubbornly.*) I have to eat first.
BILL. That's another thing 'bout black women, they wanta eat 'fore they do anything else. Tommy, . . . Tommy, . . . I bet your name is Thomasina. You look like a Thomasina.
TOMMY. You could sit there and guess til your eyes pop out and you never would guess my first name. You might could guess the middle name but not the first one.
BILL. Tell it to me.
TOMMY. My name is Tomorrow.
BILL. How's that?
TOMMY. Tomorrow, . . . like yesterday and *tomorrow,* and the middle name is just plain Marie. That's what my father name me, Tomorrow Marie. My mother say he thought it had a pretty sound.
BILL. Crazy! I never met a girl named Tomorrow.
TOMMY. They got to callin' me Tommy for short, so I stick with that. Tomorrow Marie, . . . Sound like a promise that can never happen.
BILL. (*Straightens chair on stand. He is very eager to start painting.*) That's what Shakespeare said, . . . "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow." Tomorrow, you will be on this canvas.
TOMMY. (*Still uneasy about being painted.*) What's the hurry? Rome wasn't built in a day, . . . that's another saying.
BILL. If I finish in time, I'll enter you in an exhibition.
TOMMY. (*Loses interest in the food. Examines the room. Looks at portrait on the wall.*) He looks like somebody I know or maybe saw before.
BILL. That's Frederick Douglass. A man who used to be a slave. He escaped and spent his life trying to make us all free. He was a great man.
TOMMY. Thank you, Mr. Douglass. Who's the light colored man? (*Indicates a frame next to the Douglass.*)
BILL. He's white. That's John Brown. They killed him for tryin'

to shoot the country outta the slavery bag. He dug us, you know. Old John said, "Hell no, slavery must go."

TOMMY. I heard all about him. Some folks say he was crazy.

BILL. If he had been shootin' at *us* they wouldn't have called him a nut.

TOMMY. School wasn't a great part-a my life.

BILL. If it was you wouldn't-a found out too much 'bout black history cause the books full-a nothin' but whitey, . . . all except the white ones who dug us, . . . they not there either. Tell me, . . . who was Elijah Lovejoy?

TOMMY. Elijah Lovejoy, . . . Mmmmmmm. I don't know. Have to do with the Bible?

BILL. No, that's another white fella, . . . Elijah had a printin' press and the main thing he printed was "Slavery got to go." Well the man moved in on him, smashed his press time after time . . . but he kept puttin' it back together and doin' his thing. So, one final day, they came in a mob and burned him to death.

TOMMY. (*Blows her nose with sympathy as she fights tears.*) That's dirty.

BILL. (*As Tommy glances at titles in book case.*) Who was Monroe Trotter?

TOMMY. Was he white?

BILL. No, soul brother. Spent his years tryin' to make it all right. Who was Harriet Tubman?

TOMMY. I heard-a her. But don't put me through no test, Billy. (*Moving around studying pictures and books.*) This room is full-a things I don' know nothin' about. How'll I get to know?

BILL. Read, go to the library, book stores, ask somebody.

TOMMY. Okay, I'm askin'. Teach me things.

BILL. Aw, baby, why torment yourself? Trouble with our women, . . . they all wanta be great brains. Leave somethin' for a man to do.

TOMMY. (*Eager to impress him.*) What you think-a Martin Luther King?

BILL. A great guy. But it's too late in the day for the singin' and prayin' now.

TOMMY. What about Malcolm X.?

BILL. Great cat . . . but there again . . . Where's the program?

TOMMY. What about Adam Powell? I voted for him. That's one

thing bout me. I vote. Maybe if everybody vote for the right people . . .

BILL. The ballot box. It would take me all my life to straighten you on that hype.

TOMMY. I got the time.

BILL. You gonna wind up with a king size headache. The Matriarchy gotta go. Yall throw them suppers together, keep your husband happy, raise the kids.

TOMMY. I don't have a husband. Course, that could be fixed. (*Leaving the unspoken proposal hanging in the air.*)

BILL. You know the greatest thing you could do for your people? Sit up there and let me put you down on canvas.

TOMMY. Bein' married and havin' a family might be good for your people as a race, but I was thinkin' bout myself a little.

BILL. Forget yourself sometime, sugar. On that canvas you'll be givin' and givin' and givin' . . . That's where you can do your thing best. What you stallin' for?

TOMMY. (*Returns to table and sits in chair.*) I . . . I don't want to pose in this outfit.

BILL. (*Patience is wearing thin.*) Why, baby, why?

TOMMY. I don't feel proud-a myself in this.

BILL. Art, baby, we talkin' art. Whatcha want . . . Ribbons? Lace? False eyelashes?

TOMMY. No, just my white dress with the orlon sweater, . . . or anything but this what I'm wearin'. You oughta see me in that dress with my pink linen shoes. Oh, hell, the shoes are gone. I forgot 'bout the fire . . .

BILL. Oh, stop fightin' me! Another thing . . . our women don't know a damn thing bout bein' feminine. *Give in* sometime. It won't kill you. You tellin' me how to paint? Maybe you oughta hang out your shingle and give art lessons! You too damn opinionated. You gonna pose or you not gonna pose? Say somethin'!

TOMMY. You makin' me nervous! Hollerin' at me. My mama never holler at me. Hollerin'.

BILL. I'll soon be too tired to pick up the brush, baby.

TOMMY. (*Eye catches picture of white woman on the wall.*) That's a white woman! Bet you never hollered at her and I bet she's your girlfriend . . . too, and when she posed for her pitcher I bet yall was laughin' . . . and you didn't buy her no frankfooter!

BILL. (*Feels a bit smug about his male prowess.*) Awww, come on,

cut that out, baby. That's a little blonde, blue-eyed chick who used to pose for me. That ain't where it's at. This is a new day, the deal is goin' down different. This is the black moment, doll. Black, black, black is bee-yoo-tee-full. Got it? *Black is beautiful.*

TOMMY. Then how come it is that I don't *feel* beautiful when you *talk* to me?!!

BILL. That's your hang-up, not mine. You supposed to stretch forth your wings like Ethiopia, shake off them chains that been holdin' you down. Langston Hughes said let 'em see how beautiful you are. But you determined not to ever be beautiful. Okay, that's what makes you Tommy.

TOMMY. Do you *have* a girl friend? And who is she?

BILL. (*Now enjoying himself to the utmost.*) Naw, naw, naw, doll. I *know* people, but none-a this "tie-you-up-and-I-own-you" jive. I ain't mistreatin' nobody and there's enough-a me to go around. That's another thing with our women, . . . they wanta *latch* on. Learn to play it by ear, roll with the punches, cut down on some-a this "got-you-to-the-grave" kinda relationship. Was today all right? Good, be glad, . . . take what's at hand because tomorrow never comes, it's always today. (*She begins to cry.*) Awwww, I didn't mean it that way . . . I forgot your name. (*He brushes her tears away.*) You act like I belong to you. You're jealous of a picture?

TOMMY. That's how women are, always studyin' each other and wonderin' how they look up 'gainst the next person.

BILL. (*A bit smug.*) That's human nature. Whatcha call healthy competition.

TOMMY. You think she's pretty?

BILL. She was, perhaps still is. Long, silky hair. She could sit on her hair.

TOMMY. (*With bitter arrogance.*) Doesn't *everybody?*

BILL. You got a head like a rock and gonna have the last word if it kills you. Baby, I bet you could knock out Mohamud Ali in the first round, then rare back and scream like Tarzan . . . "Now, I am the greatest!" (*He is very close to her and is amazed to feel a great sense of physical attraction.*) What we arguin' bout? (*Looks her over as she looks away. He suddenly wants to put the conversation on a more intimate level. His eye is on the bed.*) Maybe tomorrow would be a better time for paintin'. Wanna freshen up, take a bath, baby? Water's nice n' hot.

TOMMY. (*Knows the sound and turns to check on the look. Notices him watching the bed. Starts weeping.*) No, I don't! Nigger!

BILL. Was that nice? What the hell, let's paint the picture. Or are you gonna hold that back too?

TOMMY. I'm posin'. Shall I take off the wig?

BILL. No, it's a part of your image, ain't it? You must have a reason for wearin' it. (*Tommy snatches up her orange drink and sits in the model's chair.*)

TOMMY. (*With defiance.*) Yes, I wear it cause you and those like you go for long, silky hair, and this is the only way I can have some without burnin' my mother-grabbin' brains out. Got it? (*She accidentally knocks over container of orange drink into her lap.*) Hell, I can't wear this. I'm soaked through. I'm not gonna catch no double pneumonia sittin' up here wringin' wet while you paint and holler at me.

BILL. Bitch!

TOMMY. You must be talkin' bout your mama!

BILL. Shut up! Aw, shut-up! (*Phone rings. He finds an African throw-cloth and hands it to her.*) Put this on. Relax, don't go way mad, and all the rest-a that jazz. Change, will you? I apologize. I'm sorry. (*He picks up phone.*) Hello, survivor of a riot speaking. Who's calling? (*Tommy retires behind the screen with the throw. During the conversation she undresses and wraps the throw around her. We see Tommy and Bill, but they can't see each other.*) Sure, told you not to worry. I'll be ready for the exhibit. If you don't dig it, don't show it. Not time for you to see it yet. Yeah, yeah, next week. You just make sure your exhibition room is big enough to hold the crowds that's gonna congregate to see this fine chick I got here. (*This perks Tommy's ears up.*) You oughta see her. The finest black woman in the world . . . No, . . . the finest *any* woman in the world . . . This gorgeous satin chick is . . . is . . . black velvet moonlight . . . an ebony queen of the universe . . . (*Tommy can hardly believe her ears.*) One look at her and you go back to Spice Islands . . . She's Mother Africa. . . . You flip, double flip. She has come through everything that has been put on her . . . (*He unveils the gorgeous woman he has painted . . . "Wine In The Wilderness." Tommy believes he is talking about her.*) Regal . . . grand . . . magnificent, fantastic. . . . You would vote her the woman you'd most like to meet on a desert island,

or around the corner from anywhere. She's here with me now . . . and I don't know if I want to show her to you or anybody else . . . I'm beginnin' to have this deep attachment . . . She sparkles, man, Harriet Tubman, Queen of the Nile . . . sweetheart, wife, mother, sister, friend. . . . The night . . . a black diamond . . . A dark, beautiful dream . . . A cloud with a silvery lining . . . Her wrath is a storm over the Bahamas. "Wine In The Wilderness" . . . The memory of Africa . . . The *now* of things . . . but best of all and most important . . . She's tomorrow . . . she's my tomorrow . . . (*Tommy is dressed in the African wrap. She is suddenly awakened to the feeling of being loved and admired. She removes the wig and fluffs her hair. Her hair under the wig must not be an accurate, well-cut Afro . . . but should be rather attractive natural hair. She studies herself in a mirror. We see her taller, more relaxed and sure of herself. Perhaps braided hair will go well with Afro robe.*) Aw, man, later. You don't believe in nothin'! (*He covers "Wine In The Wilderness." Is now in a glowing mood.*) Baby, whenever you ready. (*She emerges from behind the screen. Dressed in the wrap, sans wig. He is astounded.*) Baby, what . . .? Where . . . where's the wig?

TOMMY. I don't think I want to wear it, Bill.

BILL. That is very becoming . . . the drape thing.

TOMMY. Thank you.

BILL. I don't know what to say.

TOMMY. It's time to paint. (*Steps up on the model stand and sits in the chair. She is now a queen, relaxed and smiling her appreciation for his past speech to the art dealer. Her feet are bare.*)

BILL. (*Mystified by the change in her. Tries to do a charcoal sketch.*) It is quite late.

TOMMY. Makes me no difference if it's all right with you.

BILL. (*Wants to create the other image.*) Could you put the wig back on?

TOMMY. You don't really like wigs, do you?

BILL. Well, no.

TOMMY. Then let's have things the way you like.

BILL. (*Has no answer for this. He makes a haphazard line or two as he tries to remember the other image.*) Tell me something about yourself, . . . anything.

TOMMY. (*Now on sure ground.*) I was born in Baltimore, Maryland and raised here in Harlem. My favorite flower is "Four

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BILL. (*Has no answer for this. He makes a haphazard line or two as he tries to remember the other image.*) Tell me something about yourself, . . . anything.

TOMMY. (*Now on sure ground.*) I was born in Baltimore, Maryland and raised here in Harlem. My favorite flower is "Four

O'clocks," that's a bush flower. My wearin' flower, corsage flower, is pink roses. My mama raised me, mostly by herself, God rest the dead. Mama belonged to "The Eastern Star." Her father was a "Mason." If a man in the family is a "Mason" any woman related to him can be an "Eastern Star." My grandfather was a member of "The Prince Hall Lodge." I had a uncle who was an "Elk," . . . a member of "The Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World": "The Henry Lincoln Johnson Lodge." You know, the white "Elks" are called "The Benevolent Protective Order of Elks" but the black "Elks" are called "The *Improved* Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of *the World.*" That's because the black "Elks" got the copyright first but the white "Elks" took us to court about it to keep us from usin' the name. Over fifteen hundred black folk went to jail for wearin' the "Elk" emblem on their coat lapel. Years ago, . . . that's what you call history.

BILL. I didn't know about that.

TOMMY. Oh, it's understandable. Only way I heard bout John Brown was because the black "Elks" bought his farmhouse where he trained his men to attack the government.

BILL. The black "Elks" bought the John Brown Farm? What did they do with it?

TOMMY. They built a outdoor theatre and put a perpetual light in his memory, . . . and they buildin' cottages there, one named for each state in the union and . . .

BILL. How do you know about it?

TOMMY. Well, our "Elks" helped my cousin go through school with a scholarship. She won a speaking contest and wrote a composition titled "Onward and Upward, O, My Race." That's how she won the scholarship. Coreen knows all that Elk history.

BILL. (*Seeing her with new eyes.*) Tell me some more about you, Tomorrow Marie. I bet you go to church.

TOMMY. Not much as I used to. Early in life I pledged myself in the A.M.E. Zion Church.

BILL. (*Studying her face, seeing her for the first time.*) A.M.E.

TOMMY. A.M.E. That's African Methodist Episcopal. We split off from the white Methodist Episcopal and started our own in the year Seventeen hundred and ninety six. We built our first buildin' in the year 1800. How bout that?

BILL. That right?

TOMMY. Oh, I'm just showin' off. I taught Sunday School for

two years and you had to know the history of A.M.E. Zion . . . or else you couldn't teach. My great, great grandparents was slaves.

BILL. Guess everybody's was.

TOMMY. Mine was slaves in a place called Sweetwater Springs, Virginia. We tried to look it up one time but somebody at Church told us that Sweetwater Springs had become a part of Norfolk . . . so we didn't carry it any further . . . As it would be a expense to have a lawyer trace your people.

BILL. (*Throws charcoal pencil across room.*) No good! It won't work! I can't work anymore.

TOMMY. Take a rest. Tell me about you.

BILL. (*Sits on bed.*) Everybody in my family worked for the Post Office. They bought a home in Jamaica, Long Island. Everybody on that block bought an aluminum screen door with a duck on it, . . . or was it a swan? I guess that makes my favorite flower crab grass and hedges. I have a lot of bad dreams. (*Tommy massages his temples and the back of his neck.*) A dream like suffocating, dying of suffocation. The worst kinda dream. People are standing in a weird looking art gallery, they're looking and laughing at everything I've ever done. My work begins to fade off the canvas, right before my eyes. Everything I've ever done is laughed away.

TOMMY. Don't be so hard on yourself. If I was smart as you I'd wake up singin' every mornin'. (*There is the sound of thunder. He kisses her.*) When it thunders that's the angels in heaven playin' with their hoops, rollin' their hoops and bicycle wheels in the rain. My Mama told me that.

BILL. I'm glad you're here. Black *is* beautiful, you're beautiful, A.M.E. Zion, Elks, pink roses, bush flower, . . . blooming out of the slavery of Sweetwater Springs, Virginia.

TOMMY. I'm gonna take a bath and let the riot and the hell of living go down the drain with the bath water.

BILL. Tommy, Tommy, Tomorrow Marie, let's save each other, let's be kind and good to each other while it rains and the angels roll those hoops and bicycle wheels. (*They embrace. The sound of rain.*)

(*Music in as lights come down. As lights fade down to darkness, music comes in louder. There is a flash of lightning. We see*

Tommy and Bill in each other's arms. It is very dark. Music up louder, then softer and down to very soft. Music is mixed with the sound of rain beating against the window. Music slowly fades as gray light of dawn shows at window. Lights go up gradually. The bed is rumpled and empty. Bill is in the bathroom. Tommy is at the stove turning off the coffee pot. She sets table with cups and saucers, spoons. Tommy's hair is natural, she wears another throw [African design] draped around her. She sings and hums a snatch of a joyous spiritual.)

TOMMY. "Great day, Great day, the world's on fire, Great day . . ." (*Calling out to Bill who is in bath.*) Honey, I found the coffee, and it's ready. Nothin' here to go with it but a cucumber and a Uneeda biscuit.

BILL. (*Offstage. Joyous yell from offstage.*) Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow! Good mornin', Tomorrow!

TOMMY. (*More to herself than to Bill.*) "Tomorrow and tomorrow." That's Shakespeare. (*Calls to Bill.*) 'You say that was Shakespeare?

BILL. (*Offstage.*) Right, baby, right!

TOMMY. I bet Shakespeare was black! You know how we love poetry. That's what give him away. I bet he was passin'. (*Laughs.*)

BILL. (*Offstage.*) Just you wait, one hundred years from now all the honkys gonna claim our poets just like they stole our blues. They gonna try to steal Paul Laurence Dunbar and LeRoi and Margaret Walker.

TOMMY. (*To herself.*) God moves in a mysterious way, even in the middle of a riot. (*A knock on the door.*) Great day, great day the world's on fire . . . (*Opens the door. Oldtimer enters. He is soaking wet. He does not recognize her right away.*)

OLDTIMER. 'Scuse me, I must be in the wrong place.

TOMMY. (*Patting her hair.*) This is me. Come on in, Edmond Lorenzo Matthews. I took off my hair-piece. This is me.

OLDTIMER. (*Very distracted and worried.*) Well, howdy-do and good mornin'. (*He has had a hard night of drinking and sleeplessness.*) Where Billy-boy? It pourin' down some rain out there. (*Makes his way to the window.*)

TOMMY. What's the matter?

OLDTIMER. (*Raises the window and starts pulling in the cord, the cord is weightless and he realizes there is nothing on the end*

of it.) No, no, it can't be. Where is it? It's gone! *(Looks out the window.)*
TOMMY. You gonna catch your death. You wringin' wet.
OLDTIMER. Yall take my things in? It was a bag-a loot. A suit and some odds and ends. It was my loot. Yall took it in?
TOMMY. No. *(Realizes his desperation. She calls to Bill through the closed bathroom door.)* Did you take in any loot that was outside the window?
BILL. *(Offstage.)* No.
TOMMY. He said "no."
OLDTIMER. *(Yells out window.)* Thieves, . . . dirty thieves . . . lotta good it'll do you . . .
TOMMY. *(Leads him to a chair, dries his head with a towel.)* Get outta the wet things. You smell just like a whiskey still. Why don't you take care of yourself. *(Dries off his hands.)*
OLDTIMER. Drinkin' with the boys. Likker was everywhere all night long.
TOMMY. You got to be better than this.
OLDTIMER. Everything I ever put my hand and mind to do, it turn out wrong, . . . Nothin' but mistakes . . . When you don' know, you don' know. I don' know nothin'. I'm ignorant.
TOMMY. Hush that talk . . . You know lotsa things, everybody does. *(Helps him remove wet coat.)*
OLDTIMER. Thanks. How's the trip-tick?
TOMMY. The what?
OLDTIMER. *Trip-tick.* That's a paintin'.
TOMMY. See there, you know more about art than I do. What's a trip-tick? Have some coffee and explain me a trip-tick.
OLDTIMER. *(Proud of his knowledge.)* Well, I tell you, . . . a trip-tick is a paintin' that's in three parts . . . but they all belong together to be looked at all at once. Now . . . this is the first one . . . a little innocent girl . . . *(Unveils picture.)*
TOMMY. She's sweet.
OLDTIMER. And this is "Wine In The Wilderness" . . . The Queen of the Universe . . . the finest chick in the world.
TOMMY. *(Tommy is thoughtful as he unveils the second picture.)* That's not me.
OLDTIMER. No, you gonna be this here last one. The worst gal in town. A messed-up chick that—that— *(He unveils the third canvas and is face to face with the almost blank canvas, then real-*

izes what he has said. He turns to see the stricken look on Tommy's face.)

TOMMY. The messed-up chick, *that's* why they brought me here, ain't it? That's why he wanted to paint me! Say it!

OLDTIMER. No, I'm lyin', I didn't mean it. It's the society that messed her up. Awwwwww, Tommy, don't look that-a-way. It's art, . . . it's only art . . . He couldn't mean you . . . it's art . . . *(The door opens. Cynthia and Sonny-man enter.)*

SONNY-MAN. Any body want a ride down . . . down . . . down . . . downtown? What's wrong? Excuse me . . . *(Starts back out.)*

TOMMY. *(Blocking the exit to Cynthia and Sonny-man.)* No, come on in. Stay with it . . . "Brother" . . . "Sister." Tell 'em what a trip-tick is, Oldtimer.

CYNTHIA. *(Very ashamed.)* Oh, no.

TOMMY. You don't have to tell 'em. They already know. The messed-up chick! How come you didn't pose for that, my sister? The messed-up chick lost her home last night, . . . burnt out with no place to go. You and Sonny-man gave me comfort, you cheered me up and took me in, . . . *took me in!*

CYNTHIA. Tommy, we didn't know you, we didn't mean . . .

TOMMY. It's all right! I was lost but now I'm found! Yeah, the blind can see! *(She dashes behind the screen and puts on her clothing, sweater, skirt etc.)*

OLDTIMER. *(Goes to bathroom door.)* Billy, come out!

SONNY-MAN. Billy, step out here, please! *(Bill enters shirtless, wearing dungarees.)* Oldtimer let it out 'bout the triptych.

BILL. The rest of you move on.

TOMMY. *(Looking out from behind screen.)* No, don't go a step. You brought me here, see me out!

BILL. Tommy, let me explain it to you.

TOMMY. *(Coming out from behind screen.)* I gotta check out my apartment, and my clothes and money. Cynthia, . . . I can't wait for anybody to open the door or look out for me and all that kinda crap you talk. A bunch-a liars!

BILL. Oldtimer, why you . . .

TOMMY. Leave him the hell alone. He ain't said nothin' that ain' so!

SONNY-MAN. Explain to the sister that some mistakes have been made.

BILL. Mistakes have been made, baby. The mistakes were yesterday, this is today . . .
TOMMY. Yeah, and I'm Tomorrow, remember? Trouble is I was Tommin' to you, to all of you, . . . "Oh, maybe they gon' like me." . . . I was your fool, thinkin' writers and painters know moren' me, that maybe a little bit of you would rub off on me.
CYNTHIA. We are wrong. I knew it yesterday. Tommy, I told you not to expect anything out of this . . . this arrangement.
BILL. This is a relationship, not an arrangement.
SONNY-MAN. Cynthia, I tell you all the time, keep outta other people's business. What the hell you got to do with who's gonna get what outta what? You and Oldtimer, yakkin' and yakkin'. (*To Oldtimer.*) Man, your mouth gonna kill you.
BILL. It's me and Tommy. Clear the room.
TOMMY. Better not. I'll kill him! The "black people" this and the "Afro-American" . . . that . . . You ain' got no use for none-a us. Oldtimer, you their fool too. 'Til I got here they didn't even know your damn name. There's something inside-a me that says I ain' suppose to let *nobody* play me cheap. Don't care how much they know! (*She sweeps some of the* books *to the floor.*)
BILL. Don't you have any forgiveness in you? Would I be beggin' you if I didn't care? Can't you be generous enough . . .
TOMMY. Nigger, I been too damn generous with you, already. All-a these people know I wasn't down here all night posin' for no pitcher, nigger!
BILL. Cut that out, Tommy, and you not going anywhere!
TOMMY. You wanna bet? Nigger!
BILL. Okay, you called it, baby, I did act like a low, degraded person . . .
TOMMY. (*Combing out her wig with her fingers while holding it.*) Didn't call you no low, degraded person. Nigger! (*To Cynthia who is handing her a comb.*) "Do you have to wear a wig?" Yes! To soften the blow when yall go up side-a my head with a baseball bat. (*Going back to taunting Bill and ignoring Cynthia's comb.*) Nigger!
BILL. That's enough-a that. You right and you're wrong too.
TOMMY. Ain't a-one-a us you like that's alive and walkin' by you on the street . . . you don't like flesh and blood niggers.
BILL. Call me that, baby, but don't call yourself. That what you think of yourself?

TOMMY. If a black somebody is in a history book, or printed on a pitcher, or drawed on a paintin', . . . or if they're a statue, . . . dead, and outta the way, and can't talk back, then you dig 'em and full-a so much-a damn admiration and talk 'bout "*our*" history. But when you run into us livin' and breathin' ones, with the life's blood still pumpin' through us, . . . then you comin' on 'bout how we ain' never together. You hate us, that's what! *You hate black me!*

BILL. (*Stung to the heart, confused and saddened by the half truth which applies to himself.*) I never hated you, I never will, no matter what you or any of the rest of you do to *make* me hate you. I won't! Hell, woman, why do you say that! Why would I hate you?

TOMMY. Maybe I look too much like the mother that give birth to you. Like the Ma and Pa that worked in the post office to buy you a house and a screen door with a damn duck on it. And you so ungrateful you didn't even like it.

BILL. No, I didn't, baby. I don't like screen doors with ducks on 'em.

TOMMY. You didn't like who was livin' behind them screen doors. Phoney Nigger!

BILL. That's all! Damnit! don't go there no more!

TOMMY. Hit me, so I can tear this place down and scream bloody murder.

BILL. (*Somewhere between laughter and tears.*) Looka here, baby, I'm willin' to say I'm wrong, even in fronta the room fulla people . . .

TOMMY. (*Through clenched teeth.*) Nigger.

SONNY-MAN. The sister is upset.

TOMMY. And you stop callin' me "the" sister, . . . if you feelin' so brotherly why don't you say "*my*" sister? Ain't no we-ness in your talk. "The" Afro-American, "the" black man, there's no we-ness in you. Who you think *you* are?

SONNY-MAN. I was talkin' in general er . . . *my* sister, 'bout the masses.

TOMMY. There he go again. "The" masses. Tryin' to make out like we pitiful and you got it made. You the masses your damn self and don't even know it. (*Another angry look at Bill.*) Nigger.

BILL. (*Pulls dictionary from shelf.*) Let's get this ignorant "nigger" talk squared away. You can stand some education.

TOMMY. You *treat* me like a nigger, that's what. I'd rather be called one than treated that way.
BILL. (*Questions Tommy.*) What is a nigger? (*Talks as he is trying to find word.*) A nigger is a low, degraded person, *any* low degraded person. I learned that from my teacher in the fifth grade.
TOMMY. Fifth grade is a liar! Don't pull that dictionary crap on me.
BILL. (*Pointing to the book.*) Webster's New World Dictionary of The American Language, College Edition.
TOMMY. I don't need to find out what no college white folks say nigger is.
BILL. I'm tellin' you it's a low, degraded person. Listen. (*Reads from the book.*) Nigger, N-i-g-g-e-r, . . . A Negro . . . A member of any dark-skinned people . . . Damn. (*Amazed by dictionary description.*)
SONNY-MAN. Brother Malcolm *said* that's what they meant, . . . nigger is a Negro, Negro is a nigger.
BILL. (*Slowly finishing his reading.*) A vulgar, offensive term of hostility and contempt. Well, so much for the fifth grade teacher.
SONNY-MAN. No, they do not call low, degraded white folks niggers. Come to think of it, did you ever hear whitey call Hitler a nigger? Now if some whitey digs us, . . . the others might call him a nigger-*lover*, but they don't call him no nigger.
OLDTIMER. No, they don't.
TOMMY. (*Near tears.*) When they say "nigger," just dry-long-so, they mean educated you and uneducated me. They hate you and call you "nigger," I called you "nigger" but I love you. (*There is dead silence in the room for a split second.*)
SONNY-MAN. (*Trying to establish peace.*) There you go. There you go.
CYNTHIA. (*Cautioning Sonny-man.*) Now is not the time to talk, darlin'.
BILL. You love me? Tommy, that's the greatest compliment you could . . .
TOMMY. (*Sorry she said it.*) You must be runnin' a fever, nigger, I ain' said nothin' 'bout lovin' you.
BILL. (*In a great mood.*) You did, yes, you did.
TOMMY. Well, you didn't say it to *me*.
BILL. Oh, Tommy, . . .
TOMMY. (*Cuts him off abruptly.*) And don't you dare say it

now. I'm tellin' you, . . . it ain't to be said now. (*Checks through her paper bag to see if she has everything. Starts to put on the wig, changes her mind, holds it to end of scene. Turns to the others in the room.*) Oldtimer, . . . my brothers and my sister.

OLDTIMER. I wish I was a thousand miles away, I'm so sorry. (*He sits at the foot of the model stand.*)

TOMMY. I don't stay mad, it's here today and gone tomorrow. I'm sorry your feelin's got hurt, . . . but when I'm hurt I turn and hurt back. Somewhere, in the middle of last night, I thought the old me was gone, . . . lost forever, and gladly. But today was flippin' time, so back I flipped. Now it's "turn the other cheek" time. If I can go through life other-cheekin' the white folk, . . . guess yall can be other-cheeked too. But I'm goin' back to the nitty-gritty crowd, where the talk is we-ness and us-ness. I hate to do it but I have to thank you cause I'm walkin' out with much more than I brought in. (*Goes over and looks at the queen in the "Wine In The Wilderness" painting.*) Tomorrow-Marie had such a lovely yesterday. (*Bill takes her hand, she gently removes it from his grasp.*) Bill, I don't have to wait for anybody's by-your-leave to be a "Wine In The Wilderness" woman.. I can be it if I wanta, . . . and I *am*. I am. I am. I'm not the one you made up and painted, the very pretty lady who can't talk back, . . . but I'm "Wine In The Wilderness" . . . alive and kickin', me . . . Tomorrow-Marie, cussin' and fightin' and lookin' out for my damn self cause ain' nobody else 'round to do it, dontcha know. And, Cynthia, if my hair is straight, or if it's natural, or if I wear a wig, or take it off, . . . that's all right; because wigs . . . shoes . . . hats . . . bags . . . and even this . . . (*She picks up the African throw she wore a few moments before . . . fingers it.*) They're just what you call . . . access . . . (*Fishing for the word.*) . . . like what you wear with your Easter outfit . . .

CYNTHIA. Accessories.

TOMMY. Thank you, my sister. Accessories. Somethin' you add on or take off. The real thing is takin' place on the inside . . . that's where the action is. That's "Wine In The Wilderness," . . . a woman that's a real one and a good one. And yall just better believe I'm it. (*She proceeds to the door.*)

BILL. Tommy. (*She turns. He takes the beautiful queen, "Wine In The Wilderness" from the easel.*) She's not it at all, Tommy. This

chick on the canvas, . . . nothin' but accessories, a dream I drummed up outta the junk room of my mind. (*Places the "queen" to one side.*) *You* are and . . . (*Points to Oldtimer.*) . . . Edmund Lorenzo Matthews . . . the real beautiful people, . . . Cynthia . . .
CYNTHIA. (*Bewildered and unbelieving.*) Who? Me?
BILL. Yeah, honey, you and Sonny-man, don't know how beautiful you are. (*Indicates the other side of model stand.*) Sit there.
SONNY-MAN. (*Places cushions on the floor at the foot of the model stand.*) Just sit here and be my beautiful self. (*To Cynthia.*) Turn on, baby, we gonna get our picture took. (*Cynthia smiles.*)
BILL. Now there's Oldtimer, the guy who was here before there were scholarships and grants and stuff like that, the guy they kept outta the schools, the man the factories wouldn't hire, the union wouldn't let him join . . .
SONNY-MAN. Yeah, yeah, rap to me. Where you goin' with it, man? Rap on.
BILL. I'm makin' a triptych.
SONNY-MAN. Make it, man.
BILL. (*Indicating Cynthia and Sonny-man.*) On the other side, Young Man and Woman, workin' together to do our thing.
TOMMY. (*Quietly.*) I'm goin' now.
BILL. But you belong up there in the center, "Wine In The Wilderness" . . . that's who you are. (*Moves the canvas of "the little girl" and places a sketch pad on the easel.*) The nightmare, about all that I've done disappearing before my eyes. It was a good nightmare. I was painting in the dark, all head and no heart. I couldn't see until you came, baby. (*To Cynthia, Sonny-man and Oldtimer.*) Look at Tomorrow. She came through the biggest riot of all, . . . somethin' called "Slavery," and she's even comin' through the "now" scene, . . . folks laughin' at her, even her own folks laughin' at her. And look *how* . . . with her head high like she's poppin' her fingers at the world. (*Takes up charcoal pencil and tears old page off sketch pad so he can make a fresh drawing.*) Aw, let me put it down, Tommy. "Wine In The Wilderness," you gotta let me put it down so all the little boys and girls can look up and see you on the wall. And you know what they're gonna say? "Hey, don't she look like somebody we know?" (*Tommy slowly returns and takes her seat on the stand. Tommy is holding the wig in her lap. Her hands are very graceful looking against the texture*

of the wig.) And they'll be right, you're somebody they know . . . (*He is sketching hastily. There is a sound of thunder and the patter of rain.*) Yeah, roll them hoops and bicycle wheels. (*Music in low. Music up higher as Bill continues to sketch.*)

CURTAIN