

FATHER'S DAY

The terrace of a modest apartment along Central Park West. There is a circular glass topped table. Also several chairs. A chaise lounge is placed stage left. The railing is along stage right.

Seated in a chair center stage, staring forward, is Louise, a lean, attractive woman. She wears a bikini, has obviously placed herself where she can absorb maximum sun. She is now listening to the sounds of goodbye with a large scowl on her face. Finally a door is heard shutting and silence follows. Louise sighs quietly, leans back, begins to relax.

After a moment Estelle enters. She is clearly younger than Louise, fragile, lovely. Estelle wears a bikini top, a hostess gown bottom. She crosses the deck restlessly, finally leans against the railing.

ESTELLE

(No comment- merely observing.) It's so quiet when the kids leave. So damn quiet.

LOUISE

(A smile.)

Yes. Nice, isn't it? *(A long pause follows- and even more silence.)*

ESTELLE

(Finally deciding how she feels about it.) I hate it. I just hate this much quiet.

Estelle flips on a transistor radio, dances briefly to a jazz tune, but Louise signals with a finger and Estelle cuts it off again quickly.

LOUISE

You're new to it. You'll get to where you love it. It's my favorite time of the week. I usually try taking a little nap right after Christopher leaves. *(She closes her eyes.)* Why don't you try that?

ESTELLE

I asked you and Marian in to help make a little noise. Not to take naps! *(Trying to make light- but obviously uncomfortable.)* Lunch- the three moms- Father's Day- while *they* have the kids. I thought it was kind of a cute idea.

LOUISE

Yeh- well, I think it's kind of full of shit.

Louise rises, moves to the chaise lounge, stretches out on her back, holds a sun reflector under her chin.

ESTELLE

Don't get mean, Louise- please. I just hate it when you're mean.

LOUISE

(A roar.)

When am I mean?! Ever?!

ESTELLE

Try a few minutes ago. My kids, Marian's kid- they all had presents for their daddies.

LOUISE

Presents? They had presents? Today? Am I confused?

Louise stares into the glare of the sun.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

What season is this? Don't tell me that quaint little star is shining in the East again?

ESTELLE

You were mean to Christopher- not to allow him to have a present.

LOUISE

I didn't allow or disallow. It's a holiday we don't honor. It was perpetrated by the merchants and I'll have no part of it.

ESTELLE

What did Chris give you for Mother's Day?

LOUISE

I sent it back! And I told that fruitcake ex-husband of mine I don't wear culottes and I never will.

ESTELLE

I thought you looked nice in them.

Louise reacts to this and then reaches for her towel and bag.

LOUISE

You thought I looked nice in them. O.K. I really think I'll go now, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Won't you at least wait until Marian gets back?

LOUISE

I hate Marian. I've always hated Marian. Where the hell is she?

ESTELLE

She rode down in the elevator with everybody. You know how she is.

LOUISE

I hate the way she is.

ESTELLE

Oh, Louise.

LOUISE

You know I try very hard to be patient with you, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Yes, you do.

LOUISE

I always keep in the forefront of my mind your heritage- that you're an orphan.

Louise points an accusing finger at her own forehead.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Because I'm a sucker for that kind of thing. But I must now face the fact you are the dumbest close friend I have ever had.

ESTELLE

Are we close? Already? That's nice.

LOUISE

But not easy. Because you're failing me. Do you know what I want from people, Estelle? The one thing I want? I want it from taxi drivers, I want it from salesclerks, I wanted it from a husband- and I even want it from my friends. (A roar.) HONESTY. But you can't give it. To me. You can tell Marian. But you can't tell me! Why, Estelle?

ESTELLE

(Rattled.)

What?

Louise points to a table.

LOUISE

It wouldn't take Sherlock Holmes to spot a fresh bottle of Scotch and a fresh bottle of bourbon on a table that has been devoted to gin for the last three months. (A beat as she glares at Estelle.) You've asked those bastards to join us for drinks later- haven't you?

ESTELLE

Well, after all, Louise, it *is*
Father's-

LOUISE

Don't tell me what day it is again! I
know the day. In fact, I'm *counting* on
the day.

Louise pours herself a drink.

ESTELLE

What do you mean?

LOUISE

I mean I know what I'm doing with
Father's Day.

ESTELLE

I thought you didn't honor Father's
Day.

LOUISE

I'm not honoring it. I'm using it.
Unless you've fouled me up with this
party of yours! Is it so *hard* to tell
me something? To be honest with *me*?

ESTELLE

I just know how you feel about Tom.

LOUISE

And I know how you feel about Harold.
You think he'll come bounding back to
you at any moment. But you're newly
divorced- you'll get over that feeling
within a decade.

ESTELLE

It's not final!

LOUISE

You're also trying to have a "friendly"
divorce. Well, I'm not. Do I even let
Tom come in the apartment to pick up
Christopher? It do not! And so I will
not have a drink with him!

ESTELLE

Louise- I know about Christopher- what you're going through today.

LOUISE

How do you know?

ESTELLE

Christopher told me.

LOUISE

Why would he tell you?

ESTELLE

I'm closer to his age. He thinks of me as a sister. Maybe I can help.

LOUISE

I don't want any help! And if you tell Marian-

ESTELLE

I won't! (*Beat.*) At least have lunch with us- you're two best friends.

LOUISE

We happen to be three divorcees who live in the same building- that's about all I can say for the relationship.

ESTELLE

Please don't go, Louise. Father's Day is a tough day for me too.

LOUISE

Every day is Father's Day, Estelle- it's rigged. Or haven't you noticed?

ESTELLE

I was practically out of the orphanage before I even knew there was a Father's Day. Or one for mothers. There's not a lot of talk about mothers and fathers in orphanages. But now that I do know about them, they're my favorite holidays.

LOUISE

They're not holidays, dammit! All *real* holidays come from the Bible.

ESTELLE

Honor thy father and thy mother.

LOUISE

You are so whacked out. Do you know how whacked out you are? You are whacked out!

ESTELLE

I just care about families- and always will. When I finally got one, it fell apart. I'd do anything to glue it back together. And that includes having Harold for a drink today. If that means you leave, then you leave.

LOUISE

You'd rather have Harold than me? Jesus!

ESTELLE

Harold's family. Still. I hope.

LOUISE

That orphanage damaged your brain cells- do you know that?

ESTELLE

Of course I know it.

LOUISE

Okay- I'll stay- as long as you know that. But I'll leave before those bastards return for drinks. I don't care if you're planning to serve *hot hors d'oeuvres*.

ESTELLE

Thank you.

LOUISE

I'm also going to take off my bathing suit. I sunbathe nude every Sunday up there when Christopher leaves, I'm not going to miss it down here.

ESTELLE

(Hesitant- obviously uncomfortable.)
That's nice. I've got no real objections to that.

LOUISE

You're not going to faint, are you?

Louise throws herself on the lounge, stomach down, and then unsnaps both parts of her bikini, baring her backside. But she remains stomach down, the bikini in place under her, until she replaces it later in the scene. In short, she never exposes anything but her backside. Estelle giggles at the sight of Louise nude.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

There is something very wrong with you, Estelle. Why do you keep giggling?

Estelle giggles again.

LOUSIE (CONT'D)

You know, I don't just take off my bathing suit.

Estelle stares down at Louise's nude body.

ESTELLE

What else is left?

LOUISE

I shuck all of it.

Louise stretches her arms and legs with an enormous sense of freedom.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Louise the mother- gone. Louise the divorcee- gone. I'm just a woman again- lay and let lay- the way God intended it.

Estelle crosses again to the railing and stares over.

ESTELLE

Well, would you look at Marian- is that tacky!

LOUISE

What's she doing?

ESTELLE

Kissing everybody goodbye. On the lips. *Your* husband on the lips, *my* husband on the lips.

LOUISE

How's my husband responding?

ESTELLE

Oh, yours didn't have a chance- the fat one pulled him away.

LOUISE

The fat one's there- with my husband?

ESTELLE

The fat one's married to your husband- you've got to begin accepting that fact.

LOUISE

The fat one was not supposed to be there today. Did she come up here?

ESTELLE

No. She must've waited in the lobby.

LOUISE

She breaks all the ground rules! What's she wearing? That serape and those thong sandals? Eight toes growing out of each foot?

ESTELLE

Louise, please...

LOUISE

Can you imagine what it must have been like for Tom those first few mornings- staring down at the foot of the bed and seeing twenty-six toes? (*A beat.*) Is she invited for drinks, too?

ESTELLE

No. She was very sweet about it- she declined- and even volunteered to keep the kids.

LOUISE

There's a lot of the Pied Piper in that woman. (*Beat.*) Is Marian still bidding everyone adieu?

ESTELLE

No, they're gone now- almost out of sight. I can just barely see the fat one.

LOUISE

That should hold true for about another *mile*.

ESTELLE

I hope- if Harold marries again- I won't hate his wife like you hate the fat one.

LOUISE

Now there's a safe little wish. Harold marry again? Hell!

ESTELLE

Harold is not living with Fred and Sammy- he's merely sleeping on their couch. It's a period of transition- that's why he's sleeping there- a period of transition while he thinks things through.

LOUISE

Period of transitions, hell! He's been sleeping there three months, hasn't he? How long does it take a fellow to go fag?

ESTELLE

He's not fag- he's sleeping on their *couch*. The same way Sally Bonfils slept on the Ackermans' couch for awhile.

LOUISE

And Jack Ackerman screwed Sally every other night!

ESTELLE

That wasn't a good example. Besides, homosexuals don't operate in threes- they come in couples.

LOUISE

So did the Ackermans, baby!

ESTELLE

This is such an awful way to live- exchanging the children every other weekend. They look like little prisoners of war.

LOUISE

Prisoners of love.

ESTELLE

You know the twins' favorite game? Divorce. They play it all the time with their little friends. You know *how* they play it? Half live on one side of the room- they're the fathers- and the mothers live on the other side- and they keep passing their dolls back and forth. Isn't that a terrible game?

LOUISE

What's terrible?

ESTELLE

It could be so damaging to them.

LOUISE

Damaging? When I was a kid, we used to play town tramp. We'd take on of the girls, paint her up with crayolas and pass her back and forth.

ESTELLE

And you don't think that damaged you?

LOUISE

Well, I didn't turn out to be the town tramp. I moved to the big city!
(Beat.) And just because the twins play divorce doesn't mean they'll grow up to be divorced. Hell, by the time they grow up, there probably won't even be any divorce.

ESTELLE

What makes you say that?

LOUISE

They've practically cured tuberculosis- you can take a sugar cube for infantile paralysis. Once they lick cancer, I'm sure they'll go after divorce. It'll probably turn out to be a good stiff shot in the ass. Make it part of the wedding ceremony. Do you take this woman? Do you take this man? Drop your drawers!

Louise makes the "thwatt" sound of two injections.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

By God and in front of God- you are married forever?

ESTELLE

Do you think people get divorced for *valid* reasons?

LOUISE

This shot takes care of all of them!
Boredom, irascibility, sexual
incompatibility, bodily aversion-
everything!

ESTELLE

Oh, put on your bathing suit!

LOUISE

When my butt's as brown as the rest of
my gorgeous, lean body- and not before.