

# Cloud Nine

by Caryl Churchill (from: Churchill Plays: 1)

## Act 2, Scene 1

Winter afternoon. Inside the hut of a one o'clock club, a children's playcentre in a park, **Victoria** and **Lin** mothers. **Cathy**, **Lin**'s daughter, age 4, played by a man, clinging to **Lin**. **Victoria** reading a book.

**Cathy**

Yum yum bubblegum.  
Stick it up your mother's bum.  
When it's brown  
Pull it down  
Yum yum bubblegum.

**Lin** Like your shoes, Victoria.

**Cathy**

Jack be nimble, Jack be quick,  
Jack jump over the candlestick.  
Silly Jack, he should jump higher,  
Goodness gracious, great balls of fire.

**Lin** Cathy, do stop. Do a painting.

**Cathy** You do a painting.

**Lin** You do a painting.

**Cathy** What shall I paint?

**Lin** Paint a house.

**Cathy** No.

**Lin** Princess.

**Cathy** No.

**Lin** Pirates.

**Cathy** Already done that.

**Lin** Spacemen.

**Cathy** I never paint spacemen. You know I never.

**Lin** Paint a car crash and blood everywhere.

**Cathy** No, don't tell me. I know what to paint.

**Lin** Go on then. You need an apron, where's an apron. Here.

**Cathy** Don't want an apron.

**Lin** Lift up your arms. There's a good girl.

**Cathy** I don't want to paint.

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**Lin** Don't paint. Don't paint.

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**Cathy** What shall I do? You paint. What shall I do mum?

**Victoria** There's nobody on the big bike, Cathy, quick.

**Cathy** goes out. **Victoria** is watching the children playing outside.

**Victoria** Tommy, it's Jimmy's gun. Let him have it. What the hell.

She goes on reading. She reads while she talks.

**Lin** I don't know how you can concentrate.

**Victoria** You have to or you never do anything.

**Lin** Yeh, well. It's really warm in here, that's one thing. It's better than standing out there. I got chilblains last winter.

**Victoria** It is warm.

**Lin** I suppose Tommy doesn't let you read much. I expect he talks to you while you're reading.

**Victoria** Yes, he does.

**Lin** I didn't get very far with that book you lent me.

**Victoria** That's all right.

**Lin** I was glad to have it, though. I sit with it on my lap while I'm watching telly. Well, Cathy's off. She's frightened I'm going to leave her. It's the baby minder didn't work out when she was two, she still remembers. You can't get them used to other people if you're by yourself. It's no good blaming me. She clings round my knees every morning up the nursery and they don't say anything but they make you feel you're making her do it. But I'm desperate for her to go to school. I did cry when I left her the first day. You wouldn't, you're too fucking sensible. You'll call the teacher by her first name. I really fancy you.

**Victoria** What?

**Lin** Put your book down will you for five minutes. You didn't hear a word I said.

**Victoria** I don't get much time to myself.

**Lin** Do you ever go to the movies?

**Victoria** Tommy's very funny who he's left with. My mother babysits sometimes.

**Lin** Your husband could babysit.

**Victoria** But then we couldn't go to the movies.

**Lin** You could go to the movies with me.

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**Victoria** Oh I see.

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**Lin** Couldn't you?

**Victoria** Well yes, I could.

**Lin** Friday night?

**Victoria** What film are we talking about?

**Lin** Does it matter what film?

**Victoria** Of course it does.

**Lin** You choose then. Friday night.

**Cathy** comes in with gun, shoots them saying Kiou kiou kiou, and runs off again.

Not in a foreign language, ok. You don't go in the movies to read.

**Lin** watches the children playing outside.

Don't hit him, Cathy, kill him. Point the gun, kiou, kiou, kiou. That's the way.

**Victoria** They've just banned war toys in Sweden.

**Lin** The kids'll just hit each other more.

**Victoria** Well, psychologists do differ in their opinions as to whether or not aggression is innate.

**Lin** Yeh?

**Victoria** I'm afraid I do let Tommy play with guns and just hope he'll get it out of his system and not end up in the army.

**Lin** I've got a brother in the army.

**Victoria** Oh I'm sorry. Whereabouts is he stationed?

**Lin** Belfast.

**Victoria** Oh dear.

**Lin** I've got a friend who's Irish and we went on a Troops Out march. Now my dad won't speak to me.

**Victoria** I don't get on too well with my father either.

**Lin** And your husband? How do you get on with him?

**Victoria** Oh, fine. Up and down. You know. Very well. He helps with the washing up and everything.

**Lin** I left mine two years ago. He let me keep Cathy and I'm grateful for that.

**Victoria** You shouldn't be grateful.

**Lin** I'm a lesbian.

**Victoria** You still shouldn't be grateful.

**Lin** I'm grateful he didn't hit me harder than he did.

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**Victoria** I suppose I'm very lucky with Martin.

**Lin** Don't get at me about how I bring up Cathy, ok?

**Victoria** I didn't.

**Lin** Yes you did. War toys. I'll give her a rifle for Christmas and blast Tommy's pretty head off for a start.

**Victoria** goes back to her book.

**Lin** I hate men.

**Victoria** You have to look at it in a historical perspective in terms of learnt behaviour since the industrial revolution.

**Lin** I just hate the bastards.

**Victoria** Well it's a point of view.

By now **Cathy** has come back in and started painting in many colours, without an apron.

**Edward** comes in.

**Edward** Victoria, mother's in the park. She's walking round all the paths very fast.

**Victoria** By herself?

**Edward** I told her you were here.

**Victoria** Thanks.

**Edward** Come on.

**Victoria** Ten minutes talking to my mother and I have to spend two hours in a hot bath.

**Victoria** goes out.

**Lin** Shit, Cathy, what about an apron. I don't mind you having paint on your frock but if it doesn't wash off just don't tell me you can't wear your frock with paint on, ok?

**Cathy** Ok.

**Lin** You're gay, aren't you?

**Edward** I beg your pardon?

**Lin** I really fancy your sister. I thought you'd understand. You do but you can go on pretending you don't, I don't mind. That's lovely Cathy, I like the green bit.

**Edward** Don't go around saying that. I might lose my job.

**Lin** The last gardener was ever so straight. He used to flash at all the little girls.

**Edward** I wish you hadn't said that about me. It's not true.

**Lin** It's not true and I never said it and I never thought it and I never will think it again.

**Edward** Someone might have heard you.

**Lin** Shut up about it then.

**Betty** and **Victoria** come up.

**Betty** It's quite a nasty bump.

**Victoria** He's not even crying.

**Betty** I think that's very worrying. You and Edward always cried. Perhaps he's got concussion.

**Victoria** Of course he hasn't mummy.

**Betty** That other little boy was very rough. Should you speak to somebody about him?

**Victoria** Tommy was hitting him with a spade.

**Betty** Well he's a real little boy. And so brave not to cry. You must watch him for signs of drowsiness. And nausea. If he's sick in the night, phone an ambulance. Well, you're looking very well darling, a bit tired, a bit peaky. I think the fresh air agrees with Edward. He likes the open air life because of growing up in Africa. He misses the sunshine, don't you, darling? We'll soon have Edward back on his feet. What fun it is here.

**Victoria** This is Lin. And Cathy.

**Betty** Oh Cathy what a lovely painting. What is it? Well I think it's a house on fire. I think all that red is a fire. Is that right? Or do I see legs, is it a horse? Can I have the lovely painting or is it for mummy? Children have such imagination, it makes them so exhausting. (To **Lin**.) I'm sure you're wonderful, just like Victoria. I had help with my children. One does need help. That was in Africa of course so there wasn't the servant problem. This is my son Edward. This is -

**Edward** Lin.

**Betty** Lin, this is Lin. Edward is doing something such fun, he's working in the park as a gardener. He does look exactly like a gardener.

**Edward** I am a gardener.

**Betty** He's certainly making a stab at it. Well it will be a story to tell. I expect he will write a novel about it, or perhaps a television series. Well what a pretty child Cathy is. Victoria was a pretty child just like a little doll – you can't be certain how they'll grow up. I think Victoria's very pretty but she doesn't make the most of herself, do you darling, it's not the fashion I'm told but there are still women who dress out of Vogue, well we hope that's not what Martin looks for, though in many ways I wish it was, I don't know what it is Martin looks for and nor does he I'm afraid poor Martin. Well I am rattling on. I like your skirt dear but your shoes won't do at all. Well do they have lady gardeners, Edward, because I'm going to leave your father and I think I might need to get a job, not a gardener really of course. I haven't got green fingers I'm afraid, everything I touch shrivels straight up. Vicky gave me a poinsettia last Christmas and the leaves all fell off on Boxing Day. Well good heavens, look what's happened to that lovely painting.

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**Cathy** has slowly and carefully been going over the whole sheet with black paint. She has almost finished.

**Lin** What you do that for silly? It was nice.

**Cathy** I like your earrings.

**Victoria** Did you say you're leaving Daddy?

**Betty** Do you darling? Shall I put them on you? My ears aren't pierced, I never wanted that, they just clip on the lobe.

**Lin** She'll get paint on you, mind.

**Betty** There's a pretty girl. It doesn't hurt does it? Well you'll grow up to know you have to suffer a little bit for beauty.

**Cathy** Look mum I'm pretty, I'm pretty, I'm pretty.

**Lin** Stop showing off Cathy.

**Victoria** It's time we went home. Tommy, time to go home. Last go then, all right.

**Edward** Mum did I hear you right just now?

**Cathy** I want my ears pierced.

**Betty** Ooh, not till you're big.

**Cathy** I know a girl got her ears pierced and she's three. She's got real gold.

**Betty** I don't expect she's English, darling. Can I give her a sweetie? I know they're not very good for the teeth, Vicky gets terribly cross with me. What does mummy say?

**Lin** Just one, thank you very much.

**Cathy** I like your beads.

**Betty** Yes they are pretty. Here you are.

It is the necklace from Act One.

**Cathy** Look at me, look at me. Vicky, Vicky, Vicky look at me.

**Lin** You look lovely, come on now.

**Cathy** And your hat, and your hat.

**Lin** No, that's enough.

**Betty** Of course she can have my hat.

**Cathy** Yes, yes, hat, hat. Look look look.

**Lin** That's enough, please, stop it now. Hat off, bye bye hat.

**Cathy** Give me my hat.

**Lin** Bye bye beads.

**Betty** It's just fun.

**Lin** It's very nice of you.

**Cathy** I want my beads.

**Lin** Where's the other earring?

**Cathy** I want my beads.

**Cathy** has the other earring in her hand. Meanwhile **Victoria** and **Edward** look for it.

**Edward** Is it on the floor?

**Victoria** Don't step on it.

**Edward** Where?

**Cathy** I want my beads. I want my beads.

**Lin** You'll have a smack.

**Lin** gets the earring from **Cathy**.

**Cathy** I want my beads.

**Betty** Oh dear oh dear. Have you got the earring? Thank you darling.

**Cathy** I want my beads, you're horrid, I hate you, mum, you smell.

**Betty** This is the point you see where one had help. Well it's been lovely seeing you dears and I'll be off again on my little walk.

**Victoria** You're leaving him? Really?

**Betty** Yes you hear aright, Vicky, yes. I'm finding a little flat, will be fun.

**Betty** goes.

Bye bye Tommy, granny's going now. Tommy don't hit that little girl, say goodbye to granny.

**Victoria** Fucking hell.

**Edward** Puking Jesus.

**Lin** That was news was it, leaving your father?

**Edward** They're going to want so much attention.

**Victoria** Does everybody hate their mothers?

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**Edward** Mind you, I wouldn't live with him.

**Lin** Stop snivelling, pigface. Where's your coat? Be quiet now and we'll have doughnuts for tea and if you keep on we'll have dogshit on toast.

**Cathy** laughs so much she lies on the floor.

**Victoria** Tommy, you've had two last goes. Last last last last go.

**Lin** Not that funny, come on, coat on.

**Edward** Can I have your painting?

**Cathy** What for?

**Edward** For a friend of mine.

**Cathy** What's his name?

**Edward** Gerry.

**Cathy** How old is he?

**Edward** Thirty-two.

**Cathy** You can if you like. I don't care. Kiou kiou kiou kiou.

**Cathy** goes out. **Edward** takes the painting and goes out.

**Lin** Will you have sex with me?

**Victoria** I don't know what Martin would say. Does it count as adultery with a woman?

**Lin** You'd enjoy it.

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