

Cloud Nine

by Caryl Churchill (from: Churchill Plays: 1)

Act 2, Scene 2

Spring. Swing, bench, pond nearby. **Edward** is gardening. **Gerry** sitting on a bench.

Edward I sometimes pretend we don't know each other. And you've come to the park to eat your sandwiches and look at me.

Gerry That would be more interesting, yes. Come and sit down.

Edward If the superintendent comes I'll be in trouble. It's not my dinner time yet. Where were you last night? I think you owe me an explanation. We always do tell each other everything.

Gerry Is that a rule?

Edward It's what we agreed.

Gerry It's a habit we've got into. Look, I was drunk. I woke up at 4 o'clock on somebody's floor. I was sick. I hadn't any money for a cab. I went back to sleep.

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Edward You could have phoned.

Gerry There wasn't a phone.

Edward Sorry.

Gerry There was a phone and I didn't phone you. Leave it alone, Eddy, I'm warning you.

Edward What are you going to do to me, then?

Gerry I'm going to the pub.

Edward I'll join you in ten minutes.

Gerry I didn't ask you to come. (**Edward** goes.) Two years I've been with Edward. You have to get away sometimes or you lose sight of yourself. The train from Victoria to Clapham still has those compartments without a corridor. As soon as I got on the platform I saw who I wanted. Slim hips, tense shoulders, trying not to look at anyone. I put my hand on my packet just long enough so that he couldn't miss it. The train came in. You don't want to get in too fast or some straight dumbo might get in with you. I sat by the window. I couldn't see where the fuck he'd got to. Then just as the whistle went he got in. Great. It's a six-minute journey so you can't start anything you can't finish. I stared at him and he unzipped his flies. Then he stopped. So I stood up and took my cock out. He took me in his mouth and shut his eyes tight. He was sort of mumbling it about as if he wasn't sure what to do, so I said, 'A bit tighter son' and he said 'Sorry' and then got on with it. He was jerking off with his left hand, and I could see he'd got a fairsized one. I wished he'd keep still so I could see his watch. I was getting really turned on. What if we pulled into Clapham Junction now. Of course by the time we sat down again the train was just slowing up. I felt wonderful. Then he started talking. It's better if nothing is said. Once you find he's a librarian in Walthamstow with a special interest in science fiction and lives with his aunt, then forget it. He said I hope you don't think I do this all the time. I said I hope you will from now on. He said he would if I was on the train, but why don't we go out for a meal? I opened the door before the train stopped. I told him I live with somebody, I don't want to know. He was

jogging sideways to keep up. He said 'What's your phone number, you're my ideal physical type, what sign of the zodiac are you? Where do you live? Where are you going now? It's not fair, I saw him at Victoria a couple of months later and I went straight down to the end of the platform and I picked up somebody really great who never said a word, just smiled.

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Cathy is on the swing.

Cathy Batman and Robin Had a batmobile.

Robin done a fart
And paralysed the wheel.
The wheel couldn't take it,
The engine fell apart,
All because of Robin
And his supersonic fart.

Cathy goes. **Martin**, **Victoria** and **Betty** walking slowly.

Martin Tom!

Betty He'll fall in.

Victoria No he won't.

Martin Don't go too near the edge Tom. Throw the bread from there. The ducks can get it.

Betty I'll never be able to manage. If I can't even walk down the street by myself. Everything looks so fierce.

Victoria Just watch Tommy feeding the ducks.

Betty He's going to fall in. Make Martin make him move back.

Victoria He's not going to fall in.

Betty It's since I left your father.

Victoria Mummy, it really was the right decision.

Betty Everything comes at me from all directions. Martin despises me.

Victoria Of course he doesn't, mummy.

Betty Of course he does.

Martin Throw the bread. That's the way. The duck can get it. Quack quack quack quack quack.

Betty I don't want to take pills. Lin says you can't trust doctors.

Victoria You're not taking pills. You're doing very well.

Betty But I'm so frightened.

Victoria What are you frightened of?

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Betty Victoria, you always ask that as if there was suddenly going to be an answer.

Victoria Are you all right sitting there?

Betty Yes, yes. Go and be with Martin.

Victoria joins **Martin**, **Betty** stays sitting on the bench.

Martin You take the job, you go to Manchester. You turn it down, you stay in London. People are making decisions like this every day of the week. It needn't be for more than a year. You get long vacations. Our relationship might well stand the strain of that, and if it doesn't we're better out of it. I don't want to put any pressure on you. I'd just like to know so we can sell the house. I think we're moving into an entirely different way of life if you go to Manchester because it won't end there. We could keep the house as security for Tommy but he might as well get used to the fact that life nowadays is insecure. You should ask your mother what she thinks and then do the opposite. I could just take that room in Barbara's house, and then we could babysit for each other. You think that means I want to fuck Barbara. I don't. Well, I do, but I won't. And even if I did, what's a fuck between friends? What are we meant to do it with; strangers? Whatever you want to do, I'll be delighted. If you could just let me know what it is I'm to be delighted about. Don't cry again, Vicky, I'm not the sort of man who makes women cry.

Lin has come in and sat down with **Betty**, **Cathy** joins them. She is wearing a pink dress and carrying a rifle.

Lin I've bought her three new frocks. She won't wear jeans to school any more because Tracy and Mandy called her a boy.

Cathy Tracy's got a perm.

Lin You should have shot them.

Cathy They're coming to tea and we've got to have trifle. Not trifle you make, trifle out of a packet. And you've got to wear a skirt. And tights.

Lin Tracy's mum wears jeans.

Cathy She does not. She wears velvet.

Betty Well I think you look very pretty. And if that gun has caps in it please take it a long way away.

Cathy It's got red caps. They're louder.

Martin Do you think you're well enough to do this job? You don't have to do it. No one's going to think any the less of you if you stay here with me. There's no point being so liberated you make yourself cry all the time. You stay and we'll get everything sorted out. What it is about sex, when we talk while it's happening I get to feel it's like a driving lesson. Left, right, a little faster, carry on, slow down –

Cathy shoots **Victoria**.

Cathy You're dead Vicky.

Victoria Aaaargh.

Cathy Fall over.

Victoria I'm not falling over, the ground's wet.

Cathy You're dead.

Victoria Yes, I'm dead.

Cathy The Dead Hand Gang fall over. They said I had to fall over in the mud or I can't play. That duck's a mandarin.

Martin Which one? Look, Tommy.

Cathy That's a diver. It's got a yellow eye and it dives. That's a goose. Tommy doesn't know it's a goose, he thinks it's a duck. The babies get eaten by weasels. Kiou kiou.

Cathy goes.

Martin So I lost my erection last night not because I'm not prepared to talk, it's just that taking in technical information is a different part of the brain and also I don't like to feel that you do it better to yourself. I have read the Hite report. I do know that women have to learn to get their pleasure despite our clumsy attempts at expressing undying devotion and ecstasy, and that what we spent our adolescence thinking was an animal urge we had to suppress is in fact a fine art we have to acquire. I'm not like whatever percentage of American men have become impotent as a direct result of women's liberation, which I am totally in favour of, more I sometimes think than you are yourself. Nor am I one of your villains who sticks it in, bangs away, and falls asleep. My one aim is to give you pleasure. My one aim is to give you rolling orgasms like I do other women. So why the hell don't you have them? My analysis for what it's worth is that despite all my efforts you still feel dominated by me. I in fact think it's very sad that you don't feel able to take that job. It makes me feel very guilty. I don't want you to do it just because I encourage you to do it. But don't you think you'd feel better if you did take the job? You're the one who's talked about freedom. You're the one who's experimenting with bisexuality, and I don't stop you, I think women have something to give each other. You seem to need the mutual support. You find me too overwhelming. So follow it through, go away, leave me and Tommy alone for a bit, we can manage perfectly well without you. I'm not putting any pressure on you but I don't think you're being a whole person. God knows I do everything I can to make you stand on your own two feet. Just be yourself. You don't seem to realise how insulting it is to me that you can't get yourself together.

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Martin and Victoria go.

Betty You must be very lonely yourself with no husband. You don't miss him?

Lin Not really, no.

Betty Maybe you like being on your own.

Lin I'm seeing quite a lot of Vicky. I don't live alone. I live with Cathy.

Betty I would have been frightened when I was your age. I thought, the poor children, their mother all alone.

Lin I've a lot of friends.

Betty I find when I'm making tea I put out two cups. It's strange not having a man in the house. You don't know who to do things for.

Lin Yourself.

Betty Oh, that's very selfish.

Lin Have you any women friends?

Betty I've never been so short of men's company that I've had to bother with women.

Lin Don't you like women?

Betty They don't have such interesting conversations as men. There has never been a woman composer of genius. They don't have a sense of humour. They spoil things for themselves with their emotions. I can't say I do like women very much, no.

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Lin But you're a woman.

Betty There's nothing says you have to like yourself.

Lin Do you like me?

Betty There's no need to take it personally, Lin.

Martin and **Victoria** come back.

Martin Did you know if you put cocaine on your prick you can keep it up all night? The only thing is of course it goes numb so you don't feel anything. But you would, that's the main thing. I just want to make you happy.

Betty Vicky, I'd like to go home.

Victoria Yes, mummy, of course.

Betty I'm sorry, dear.

Victoria I think Tommy would like to stay out a bit longer.

Lin Hello, Martin. We do keep out of each other's way.

Martin I think that's the best thing to do.

Betty Perhaps you'd walk home with me, Martin. I do feel safer with a man. The park is so large the grass seems to tilt.

Martin Yes, I'd like to go home and do some work. I'm writing a novel about women from the women's point of view.

Martin and **Betty** go. **Lin** and **Victoria** are alone. They embrace.

Victoria Why the hell can't he just be a wife and come with me? Why does Martin make me tie myself in knots? No wonder we can't just have a simple fuck. No, not Martin, why do I make myself tie myself in knots. It's got to stop, Lin. I'm not like that with you. Would you love me if I went to Manchester?

Lin Yes.

Victoria Would you love me if I went on a climbing expedition in the Andes mountains?

Lin Yes.

Victoria Would you love me if my teeth fell out?

Lin Yes.

Victoria Would you love me if I loved ten other people?

Lin And me?

Victoria Yes.

Lin Yes.

Victoria And I feel apologetic for not being quite so subordinate as I was. I am more intelligent than him. I am brilliant.

Lin Leave him Vic. Come and live with me.

Victoria Don't be silly.

Lin Silly, Christ, don't then. I'm not asking because I need to live with someone. I'd enjoy it, that's all, we'd both enjoy it. Fuck you. Cathy, for fuck's sake stop throwing stones at the ducks. The man's going to get you.

Victoria What man? Do you need a man to frighten your child with?

Lin My mother said it.

Victoria You're so inconsistent, Lin.

Lin I've changed who I sleep with, I can't change everything.

Victoria Like when I had to stop you getting a job in a boutique and collaborating with sexist consumerism.

Lin I should have got that job, Cathy would have liked it. Why shouldn't I have some decent clothes? I'm sick of dressing like a boy, why can't I look sexy, wouldn't you love me?

Victoria Lin, you've no analysis.

Lin No but I'm good at kissing aren't I? I give Cathy guns, my mum didn't give me guns. I dress her in jeans, she wants to wear dresses. I don't know. I can't work it out, I don't want to. You read too many books, you get at me all the time, you're worse to me than Martin is to you, you piss me off, my brother's been killed. I'm sorry to win the argument that way but there it is.

Victoria What do you mean win the argument?

Lin I mean be nice to me.

Victoria In Belfast?

Lin I heard this morning. Don't don't start. I've hardly seen him for two years. I rung my father. You'd think I'd shot himself. He doesn't want me to go to the funeral.

Cathy approaches.

Victoria What will you do?

Lin Go of course.

Cathy What is it? Who's killed? What?

Lin It's Bill. Your uncle. In the army. Bill that gave you the blue teddy.

Cathy Can I have his gun?

Lin It's time we went home. Time you went to bed.

Cathy No it's not.

Lin We go home and you have tea and you have a bath and you go to bed.

Cathy Fuck off.

Lin Cathy, shut up.

Victoria It's only half past five, why don't we -

Lin I'll tell you why she has to go to bed -

Victoria She can come home with me.

Lin Because I want her out the fucking way.

Victoria She can come home with me.

Cathy I'm not going to bed.

Lin I want her home with me not home with you, I want her in bed, I want today over.

Cathy I'm not going to bed.

Lin hits **Cathy**, **Cathy** cries.

Lin And shut up or I'll give you something to cry for.

Cathy I'm not going to bed.

Victoria Cathy-

Lin You keep out of it.

Victoria Lin for God's sake.

They are all shouting. **Cathy** runs off. **Lin** and **Victoria** are silent. Then they laugh and embrace.

Lin Where's Tommy?

Victoria What? Didn't he go with Martin?

Lin Did he?

Victoria God oh God.

Lin Cathy! Cathy!

Victoria I haven't thought about him. How could I not think about him? Tommy!

Lin Cathy! Come on, quick, I want some help.

Victoria Tommy! Tommy!

Cathy comes back.

Lin Where's Tommy? Have you seen him? Did he go with Martin? Do you know where he is?

Cathy I showed him the goose. We went in the bushes.

Lin Then what?

Cathy I came back on the swing.

Victoria And Tommy? Where was Tommy?

Cathy He fed the ducks.

Lin No that was before.

Cathy He did a pee in the bushes. I helped him with his trousers.

Victoria And after that?

Cathy He fed the ducks.

Victoria No no.

Cathy He liked the ducks. I expect he fell in.

Lin Did you see him fall in?

Victoria Tommy! Tommy!

Lin What's the last time you saw him?

Cathy He did a pee.

Victoria Mummy said he would fall in. Oh God, Tommy!

Lin We'll go round the pond. We'll go opposite ways round the pond.

All (Shout) Tommy!

Victoria and **Lin** go off opposite sides. **Cathy** climbs the bench.

Cathy Georgie Best, superstar
Walks like a woman and wears a bra.
There he is! I see him! Mum! Vicky! There he is! He's in the bushes.

Lin comes back.

Lin Come on Cathy love, let's go home.

Cathy Vicky's got him.

Lin Come on.

Cathy Is she cross?

Lin No. Come on.

Cathy I found him.

Lin Yes. Come on.

Cathy gets off the bench. **Cathy** and **Lin** hug.

Cathy I'm watching telly.

Lin Ok.

Cathy After the news.

Lin Ok.

Cathy I'm not going to bed.

Lin Yes you are.

Cathy I'm not going to bed now.

Lin Not now but early.

Cathy How early?

Lin Not late.

Cathy How not late?

Lin Early.

Cathy How early?

Lin Not late.

They go off together. **Gerry** comes on. He waits. **Edward** comes.

Edward I've got some fish for dinner. I thought I'd make a cheese sauce.

Gerry I won't be in.

Edward Where are you going?

Gerry For a start I'm going to a sauna. Then I'll see.

Edward All right. What time will you be back? We'll eat then.

Gerry You're getting like a wife.

Edward I don't mind that.

Gerry Why don't I do the cooking sometime?

Edward You can if you like. You're just not so good at it that's all. Do it tonight.

Gerry I won't be in tonight.

Edward Do it tomorrow. If we can't eat it we can always go to a restaurant.

Gerry Stop it.

Edward Stop what?

Gerry Just be yourself.

Edward I don't know what you mean. Everyone's always tried to stop me being feminine and now you are too.

Gerry You're putting it on.

Edward I like doing the cooking. I like being fucked. You do like me like this really.

Gerry I'm bored, Eddy.

Edward Go to the sauna.

Gerry And you'll stay home and wait up for me.

Edward No, I'll go to bed and read a book.

Gerry Or knit. You could knit me a pair of socks.

Edward I might knit. I like knitting.

Gerry I don't mind if you knit. I don't want to be married.

Edward I do.

Gerry Well I'm divorcing you.

Edward I wouldn't want to keep a man who wants his freedom.

Gerry Eddy, do stop playing the injured wife, it's not funny.

Edward I'm not playing. It's true.

Gerry I'm not the husband so you can't be the wife.

Edward I'll always be here, Gerry, if you want to come back. I know you men like to go off by yourselves. I don't think I could love deeply more than once. But I don't think I can face life on my own so don't leave it too long or it may be too late.

Gerry What are you trying to turn me into?

Edward A monster, darling, which is what you are.

Gerry I'll collect my stuff from the flat in the morning.

Gerry goes. **Edward** sits on the bench. It gets darker. **Victoria** comes.

Victoria Tommy dropped a toy car somewhere, you haven't seen it? It's red. He says it's his best one. Oh the hell with it. Martin's reading him a story. There, isn't it quiet?

They sit on the bench, holding hands.

Edward I like women.

Victoria That should please mother.

Edward No listen Vicky. I'd rather be a woman. I wish I had breasts like that, I think they're beautiful. Can I touch them?

Victoria What, pretending they're yours?

Edward No, I know it's you.

Victoria I think I should warn you I'm enjoying this.

Edward I'm sick of men.

Victoria I'm sick of men.

Edward I think I'm a lesbian.

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