

Cloud Nine

by Caryl Churchill (from: Churchill Plays: 1)

Act 2, Scene 4

The park. Afternoon in late summer. **Martin, Cathy, Edward.**

Cathy

Under the bramble bushes,
Under the sea boom boom boom,
True love for you my darling,
True love for me my darling,
When we are married,
We'll raise a family.
Boy for you, girl for me,
Boom tiddley oom boom
SEXY.

Edward You'll have Tommy and Cathy tonight then ok? Tommy's still on antibiotics, do make him finish the bottle, he takes it in Ribena. It's no good in orange, he spits it out. Remind me to give you Cathy's swimming things.

Cathy I did six strokes, didn't I Martin? Did I do a width? How many strokes is a length? How many miles is a swimming pool? I'm going to take my bronze and silver and gold and diamond.

Martin Is Tommy still wetting the bed?

Edward Don't get angry with him about it.

Martin I just need to go to the launderette so I've got a spare sheet. Of course I don't get fucking angry, Eddy, for God's sake. I don't like to say he is my son but he is my son. I'm surprised I'm not wetting the bed myself.

Cathy I don't wet the bed ever. Do you wet the bed Martin?

Martin No.

Cathy You said you did.

Betty comes.

Betty I do miss the sun living in England but today couldn't be more beautiful. You appreciate the weekend when you're working. Betty's been at work this week, Cathy. It's terrible tiring, Martin, I don't know how you've done it all these years. And the money, I feel like a child with the money, Clive always paid everything but I do understand it perfectly well. Look Cathy let me show you my money.

Cathy I'll count it. Let me count it. What's that?

Betty Five pounds, Five and five is -?

Cathy One two three -

Betty Five and five is ten, and five -

Cathy If I get it right can I have one?

Edward No you can't.

Cathy goes on counting the money.

Betty I never like to say anything, Martin, or you'll think I'm being a mother-in-law.

Edward Which you are.

Betty Thank you, Edward, I'm not talking to you. Martin, I think you're being wonderful. Vicky will come back. Just let her stay with Lin till she sorts herself out. It's very nice for a girl to have a friend; I had friends at school, that was very nice. But I'm sure Lin and Edward don't want her with them all the time. I'm not at all shocked that Lin and Edward aren't married and she already has a child, we all know first marriages don't always work out. But really Vicky must be in the way. And poor little Tommy. I hear he doesn't sleep properly and he's had a cough.

Martin No, he's fine, Betty, thank you.

Cathy My bed's horrible. I want to sleep in the big bed with Lin and Vicky and Eddy and I do get in if I've got a bad dream, and my bed's got a bump right in my back. I want to sleep in a tent.

Betty Well Tommy has got a nasty cough, Martin, whatever you say.

Edward He's over that. He's got some medicine.

Martin He takes it in Ribena.

Betty Well I'm glad to hear it. Look what a lot of money, Cathy, and I sit behind a desk of my own and I answer the telephone and keep the doctor's appointment book and it really is great fun.

Cathy Can we go camping, Martin, in a tent? We could take the Dead Hand Gang.

Betty Not those big boys, Cathy? They're far too big and rough for you. They climb back into the park after dark. I'm sure mummy doesn't let you play with them, does she Edward? Well I don't know.

Ice cream bells.

Cathy Ice cream. Martin you promised. I'll have a double ninety-nine. No I'll have a shandy lolly. Betty, you have a shandy lolly and I'll have a lick. No, you have a double ninety-nine and I'll have the chocolate.

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Martin, Cathy and Betty go, leaving **Edward**. **Gerry** comes.

Gerry Hello, Eddy. Thought I might find you here.

Edward Gerry.

Gerry Not working today then?

Edward I don't work here any more.

Gerry Your mum got you into a dark suit?

Edward No of course not. I'm on the dole. I am working, though, I do housework.

Gerry Whose wife are you now then?

Edward Nobody's. I don't think like that any more. I'm living with some women.

Gerry What women?

Edward It's my sister, Vic, and her lover. They go out to work and I look after the kids.

Gerry I thought for a moment you said you were living with women.

Edward We do sleep together, yes.

Gerry I was passing the park anyway so I thought I'd look in. I was in the sauna the other night and I saw someone who looked like you but it wasn't. I had sex with him anyway.

Edward I do go to the sauna sometimes.

Cathy comes, gives **Edward** an ice cream, goes.

Gerry I don't think I'd like living with children. They make a lot of noise don't they?

Edward I tell them to shut up and they shut up. I wouldn't want to leave them at the moment.

Gerry Look why don't we go for a meal sometime?

Edward Yes I'd like that. Where are you living now?

Gerry Same place.

Edward I'll come round for you tomorrow night about 7.30.

Gerry Great.

Edward goes. **Harry** comes. **Harry** and **Gerry** pick each other up. They go off. **Betty** comes back.

Betty No, the ice cream was my treat, Martin. Off you go. I'm going to have a quiet sit in the sun.

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Maud comes.

Maud Let Mrs Saunders be a warning to you, Betty. I know what it is to be unprotected.

Betty But mother, I have a job. I earn money.

Maud I know we have our little differences but I always want what is best for you.

Ellen comes.

Ellen Betty, what happens with a man?

Betty You just keep still.

Ellen And is it enjoyable? Don't forget me, Betty.

Maud and **Ellen** go.

Betty I used to think Clive was the one who liked sex. But then I found I missed it. I used to touch myself when I was very little, I thought I'd invented something wonderful. I used to do it to go to sleep with or to cheer myself up, and one day it was raining and I was under the kitchen table, and my mother saw me with my hand under my dress rubbing away, and she dragged me out so quickly I hit my head and it bled and I was sick, and nothing was said,

and I never did it again till this year. I thought if Clive wasn't looking at me there wasn't a person there. And one night in bed in my flat I was so frightened I started touching myself. I thought my hand might go through space. I touched my face, it was there, my arm, my breast, and my hand went down where I thought it shouldn't, and I thought well there is somebody there. It felt very sweet, it was a feeling from very long ago, it was very soft, just barely touching, and I felt myself gathering together more and more and I felt angry with Clive and angry with my mother and I went on and on defying them, and there was this vast feeling growing in me and all round me and they couldn't stop me and no one could stop me and I was there and coming and coming. Afterwards I thought I'd betrayed Clive. My mother would kill me. But I felt triumphant because I was a separate person from them. And I cried because I didn't want to be. But I don't cry about it any more. Sometimes I do it three times in one night and it really is great fun.

Victoria and **Lin** come in.

Victoria So I said to the professor, I don't think this is an occasion for invoking the concept of structural causality - oh hello mummy.

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Betty I'm going to ask you a question, both of you. I have a little money from your grandmother. And the three of you are living in that tiny flat with two children. I wonder if we could get a house and all live in it together? It would give you more room.

Victoria But I'm going to Manchester anyway.

Lin We'd have a garden, Vicky.

Betty You do seem to have such fun all of you.

Victoria I don't want to.

Betty I didn't think you would.

Lin Come on, Vicky, she knows we sleep together, and Eddy.

Betty I think I've known for quite a while but I'm not sure. I don't usually think about it, so I don't know if I know about it or not.

Victoria I don't want to live with my mother.

Lin Don't think of her as your mother, think of her as Betty.

Victoria But she thinks of herself as my mother.

Betty I am your mother.

Victoria But mummy we don't even like each other.

Betty We might begin to.

Cathy comes on howling with a nosebleed.

Lin Oh Cathy what happened?

Betty She's been assaulted.

Victoria It's a nosebleed.

Cathy Took my ice cream.

Lin Who did?

Cathy Took my money.

Martin comes.

Martin Is everything all right?

Lin I thought you were looking after her.

Cathy They hit me. I can't play. They said I'm a girl.

Betty Those dreadful boys, the gang, the Dead Hand.

Martin What do you mean you thought I was looking after her?

Lin Last I saw her she was with you getting an ice cream. It's your afternoon.

Martin Then she went off to play. She goes off to play. You don't keep an eye on her every minute.

Lin She doesn't get beaten up when I'm looking after her.

Cathy Took my money.

Martin Why the hell should I look after your child anyway? I just want Tommy. Why should he live with you and Vicky all week?

Lin I don't mind if you don't want to look after her but don't say you will and then this happens.

Victoria When I get to Manchester everything's going to be different anyway, Lin's staying here, and you're staying here, we're all going to have to sit down and talk it through.

Martin I'd really enjoy that.

Cathy Hit me on the face.

Lin You were the one looking after her and look at her now, 's all.

Martin I've had enough of you telling me.

Lin Yes you know it all.

Martin Now stop it. I work very hard at not being like this, I could do with some credit.

Lin Ok you're quite nice, try and enjoy it. Don't make me sorry for you, Martin, it's hard for me too. We've better things to do than quarrel. I've got to go and sort those little bastards out for a start. Where are they, Cathy?

Cathy Don't kill them, mum, hit them. Give them a nosebleed, mum.

Lin goes.

Victoria Tommy's asleep in the pushchair. We'd better wake him up or he won't sleep tonight.

Martin Sometimes I keep him up watching television till he falls asleep on the sofa so I can hold him. Come on, Cathy, we'll get another ice cream.

Cathy Chocolate sauce and nuts.

Victoria Betty, would you like an ice cream?

Betty No thank you, the cold hurts my teeth, but what a nice thought, Vicky, thank you.

Victoria goes. **Betty** alone. **Gerry** comes.

Betty I think you used to be Edward's flatmate.

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Gerry You're his mother. He's talked about you.

Betty Well never mind. Children are always wrong about their parents. It's great problem knowing where to live and who to share with. I live by myself just now.

Gerry Good, So do I. You can do what you like.

Betty I don't really know what I like.

Gerry You'll soon find out.

Betty What do you like?

Gerry Waking up at four in the morning.

Betty I like listening to music in bed and sometimes for supper I just have a big piece of bread and dip it in very hot lime pickle. So you don't get lonely by yourself? Perhaps you have a lot of visitors. I've been thinking I should have some visitors, I could give a little dinner party. Would you come? There wouldn't just be bread and lime pickle.

Gerry Thank you very much.

Betty Or don't wait to be asked to dinner. Just drop in informally. I'll give you the address shall I? I don't usually give strange men my address but then you're not a strange man, you're a friend of Edward's. I suppose I seem a different generation to you but you are older than Edward. I was married for so many years it's quite hard to know how to get acquainted. But if there isn't a right way to do things you have to invent one. I always thought my mother was far too old to be attractive but when you get to an age yourself it feels quite different.

Gerry I think you could be quite attractive.

Betty If what?

Gerry If you stop worrying.

Betty I think when I do more about things I worry about them less. So perhaps you could help me do more.

Gerry I might be going to live with Edward again.

Betty That's nice, but I'm rather surprised if he wants to share a flat. He's rather involved with a young woman he lives with, or two young women, I don't understand Edward but never mind.

Gerry I'm very involved with him.

Betty I think Edward did try to tell me once but I didn't listen. So what I'm being told now is that Edward is 'gay' is that right? And you are too. And I've being making rather a fool of myself. But Edward does also sleep with women.

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Gerry He does, yes, I don't.

Betty Well people always say it's the mother's fault but I don't intend to start blaming myself. He seems perfectly happy.

Gerry I could still come and see you.

Betty So you could, yes. I'd like that. I've never tried to pick up a man before.

Gerry Not everyone's gay.

Betty No, that's lucky isn't it.

Gerry goes. **Clive** comes.

Clive You are not that sort of woman, Betty. I can't believe you are. I can't feel the same about you as I did. And Africa is to be communist I suppose. I used to be proud to be British. There was a high ideal. I came out onto the verandah and looked at the stars.

Clive goes. **Betty** from Act One comes. **Betty** and **Betty** embrace.

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