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 tie 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 divorcée- 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 one 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.