

*(Marian walks up to Louise and slaps her)*

LOUISE: What was that for?

MARIAN: For tormenting me. Don't ever do it again.

LOUISE: Hurt that bad, did it?

MARIAN: Yes.

LOUISE: Okay—then it was worth it. Did you hit Harold that hard?

MARIAN: I forgot I struck Harold.

LOUISE: You're having quite a day.

MARIAN: It was when he said he was marrying a DuPont.

LOUISE: Marrying a *DuPont*? I didn't hear that.

MARIAN: That's when I struck him.

LOUISE: Well, now I understand—what with your Communist upbringing—face to face with a DuPont lover.

MARIAN: I didn't think about it, it was instinctive. He said DuPont and I swung.

*(Harold enters)*

HAROLD: I thought Tom and Richard were still out here.

LOUISE: No—just me and the slugger.

HAROLD: Have the fellows left?

MARIAN: Yes.

HAROLD: Oh...then the party's over?

LOUISE: Till next year—yeh. Same time, same place, same smiling faces.

HAROLD: Is Estelle all right?

LOUISE: Oh, didn't you hear? She made a remarkable recovery. Was out here singing, dancing. But then she

got to tapping on the ledge and fell off. Is that life or isn't it?

HAROLD: I'd better go. I'll just slip out.

LOUISE: Without bidding Estelle adieu? Tell him how tacky that is, Marian. How much that hurts.

MARIAN: Is *she* waiting for you?

HAROLD: No. She's in Wilmington this weekend.

LOUISE: Wilmington, Delaware—yuuck! It's not easy being a DuPont, is it? And the way they board that train every weekend. I used to go down to Washington some on the weekends. There'd always be a carful of little DuPonts, going home for their allowances.

HAROLD: She's not one of the monied DuPonts.

LOUISE: Oh, they teach them all to say that.

MARIAN: How do you meet a DuPont, Harold?

LOUISE: You're not listening, Marian—I just told you—you take that weekend train.

MARIAN: How did you meet *yours*?

HAROLD: She was at Bennington.

MARIAN: Bennington? A teacher?

LOUISE: Guess again.

HAROLD: She's nineteen, Marian.

MARIAN: (*A sigh.*) I see.

LOUISE: No, you don't. Neither do I. Nor does any other female in her prime. We're at our peak sexually—and at our best.

MARIAN: That is true.

LOUISE: And where are our counterparts—males at their peak sexually—all those gorgeous seventeen, eighteen, nineteen-year-old boys? If we lay a hand on them we're depraved. But you, you sons of bitches—over the hill at thirty—on your way down—every last one of you—don't deny it. Yet you can rape, pillage and marry any nineteen-year-old you can drag back to your cave—for all the good it'll do you when you get her there! And sex isn't the half of it! We marry you, we have your kids, you grow restless and move on, the kids

grow up and move out. And what are we left with? What the hell do you think Estelle's equipped to do? I know I wasn't a very good actress, but what if I hadn't stopped to play wife/mother for a decade? It's too damn late to try again—I don't have the strength. And I'm too damn old to play wife/mother again. What are we supposed to do?

MARIAN: Harold—how did you happen to go to Bennington?

HAROLD: I didn't. They send the girls out for part of the year. To take jobs. It's called their non-resident term—a third of the school year. They can go anywhere they like—take any kind of job they like—the pay isn't important.

LOUISE: A *third* of the school year?

HAROLD: Yes. (*Louise breaks into laughter*). What's funny?

MARIAN: Don't ask—please.

LOUISE: (*Still laughing*.) No one thing. My mind splintered in a hundred directions.

MARIAN: Good. Share *none* of them with us.

LOUISE: (*Continuing to laugh, holding up one finger*.) Just one. I was thinking of some of the girls *I* used to know—in high school—who had to go right into jobs at Sears—or Hank's Diner—and never knew they were getting a third of a Bennington education. Oh God, I hate all those schools so much! No reflection on Miss DuPont intended. I've never reflected on the DuPonts, I don't intend to start now. I seem to be losing my grip.

MARIAN: We've noticed. So she came to work at *your* store? Miss DuPont?

HAROLD: That's right.

MARIAN: But whatever made her choose Ross: Dress For Less?

HAROLD: She admires Ross.

MARIAN: Well, which of us doesn't?

HAROLD: Estelle couldn't even understand Ross.

LOUISE: Well, which of us can?

HAROLD: Shulie can.

MARIAN: Shulie? (*Simultaneously*) LOUISE: Shulie?

HAROLD: It's short for Shulamith.

LOUISE: Why, of course. In fact, I knew a Firestone named Shulamith. Shulamith—Winthrop—Edsel—those people use those names the way we use Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

HAROLD: Shulie's very turned on by discount merchandising.

LOUISE: Well—gather ye kicks where ye may.

HAROLD: She feels Ross has done a terrific job—especially with our Lexington Avenue store. She says that's just where discount merchandising belongs—across the street from Barney's.

MARIAN: You're sure she's a DuPont?

LOUISE: (*Estelle appears in the doorway.*) Well—would you look at that!! Fell of the ledge and landed on her feet. You see, Harold—women are *tough!* Come on out. We were just talking about—

MARIAN: About *leaving*. Shall we go, Louise?