

ESCAPE ON A BLUE NOTE
Tracy Werth, Phoenix College
Honorable Mention, One-Act Play

CAST: MOTHER, 38, trim, well-dressed patrician features
ROSALEE, 18, wide-eyed, clean-scrubbed
FATHER, 42, handsome, but slick

SCENE: Two story brick buildings with lacy, wrought iron balconies line a cobblestone street in New Orleans French Quarter. The two women are walking down the street.

MOTHER: You didn't tell Gramps anything, did you?

ROSALEE: I told him we were going to Lake Ponchartrain for a picnic.

MOTHER: He'd have another stroke if he knew what we were doing.

(The women stop walking to look in an antique store window.)

ROSALEE: That's just like the statue Gram has in her living room.

MOTHER: Probably an heirloom hocked by the family drunk.

(Laughter spills from an upstairs window and mixes with jazz music coming from a Bourbon Street bar down the street)

ROSALEE: I can't believe you've never brought me here before.

MOTHER: This isn't exactly the safest city in Louisiana. At least in Lee's Landing...

ROSALEE: I know, I know. Lee's Landing is the safest city with the most proper people. And why can't I be satisfied living the rest of my life there, married to Tommy Thigpen?

MOTHER: The Thigpens are the most respected family in the county.

ROSALEE: And Tommy Thigpen is a brat. Would you really want to see me married to a boy whose butt crack is always hanging out of his pants?

MOTHER: Forget Tommy then. But finding your father to ask him if you can live here in New Orleans with him isn't the best plan either. I don't understand why you want to leave home. You're only eighteen.

ROSALEE: Maybe because you suffocate me. No wonder Daddy left.

MOTHER: I call it protecting you.

ROSALEE: Protecting me from what? Life?

MOTHER: Living with your father in New Orleans is not the way to learn about life.

ROSALEE: If we can even find him.

MOTHER: I know how to find him.

ROSALEE: Too bad you didn't know how to keep him.

MOTHER: Keep him? He was a no-good bum and I was happy to see him leave.

ROSALEE: Maybe if you and Gramps weren't so hard on him he wouldn't have wanted to leave.

MOTHER: Your father left because he didn't like living a respectable life. Gramps gave him a job, put a roof over our heads, but that wasn't good enough. Lee's Landing wasn't exciting enough.

ROSALEE: Then I guess I'm just like my father. I hate Lee's Landing.

MOTHER: Be thankful you're nothing like him.

(The women continue to walk down the street.)

ROSALEE: Do you know where we're going?

MOTHER: Unfortunately, I do.

(They stop at a bar. The sign says "Old Absinthe House.")

ROSALEE: Does he work here?

MOTHER: "Work" is not a word in your father's vocabulary. This is just one of the places he spends his time in. Wait here while I see if he's inside.

(Mother exits through door and soon returns.)

MOTHER: He's not here. But the bartender said to check the Carousel.

ROSALEE: At a park?

MOTHER: Not that kind of carousel. It's a bar.

(They continue walking.)

ROSALEE: Did you ever love him?

MOTHER: Who? Your father? Let's just say you're a lot like I was at your age. Chomping at the bit to leave home. Your father seemed the answer to all my dreams.

ROSALEE: But did you love him?

MOTHER: I thought I did.

ROSALEE: What changed everything?

MOTHER: Parents are supposed to provide stability for their children. Your father didn't seem to understand that.

ROSALEE: But, I can look after myself now. If Daddy would just let me stay with him until I find a job. With all those secretarial classes I took, I bet I could find a job in a day.

MOTHER: You know how I feel. You just graduated from high school. Work at Gramps' office. Save some money and get an apartment with a friend from school. You don't have to leave Lee's Landing to feel like an adult.

ROSALEE: Maybe I'm more like Daddy than you think.

MOTHER: Here's the Carousel. I'll see if he's inside.

(Mother exits through door. A moment later, a man exits bar. Before door closes, Rosalee slips inside and stands in the shadows. Her mother is standing next to a handsome man sitting on a barstool.)

FATHER: *(he taps her nose)* Don't threaten me my dear. That scar should remind you of what happens when you try and tell me how to run my life.

MOTHER: All I'm asking is that you tell her you're leaving town. Tell her you would love to help her, but that you need to go away on business. That was always your excuse when you promised to see her and didn't show up.

FATHER: If our daughter's too much for you to handle, maybe she should come live with me. My rent's overdue and I'm sure our girl could find a job to help me out. I believe they've got an opening for a barmaid right here.

(Rosalee exits bar back to street. After a moment, her mother also exits onto street to join Rosalee.)

MOTHER: *(reaching into her purse)* He's here. I'll give you some money. He'll be out in a minute. You two can go talk over some lunch.

ROSALEE: Aren't you going with us?

MOTHER: I know you're not a little girl anymore and I can't stop you from wanting to leave home. Just think about what would be best for you, Rosalee, not what I want or what your father says. I'll wait for you at the car.

(From an open window above the bar, we hear a woman crying against the sound of a blues record playing. The lyric "He'll break your heart" plays, then the phonograph needle sticks, making the lyric play over and over.)

ROSALEE: Let's go before he comes out.

MOTHER: But don't you want to see your father?

ROSALEE: I just want to go home.

(Rosalee grabs her mother's arm and pulls her down the street and offstage as curtain falls.)

THE END

