

Black. Back home—our home, near Louisville—they aren't city slum or black, they're just poor. But they have baby after baby dying like flies. They have—every shack along the road has a screaming, dirty, skinny mess of kids on the porch, and a grave plot alongside the house with four or five markers. It's no different.

GLORIA: It's a great deal different, when it's your own sister dead on the bed in front of you, my dear.

BARBARA: You don't think about other people, Gloria, you never once do; and you're very smart, actually, about other things—

GLORIA: —When every apartment is wall-to-wall screaming and filth, every pore of the rotting building you live in is death, you don't consider other people's misery, Barbara. I *lived* in misery.

BARBARA: Well, so did millions of other people. *Worse.* Not me, although it wasn't much better. It's not so crowded in Harlem as it is in Indonesia. In Indonesia people, millions of people, are living on just one bowl of—

GLORIA: —Fuck Indonesia! *Beat.* Fuck the Indonesians. What the hell are the Indonesians to me?

BARBARA: Well, I'm not saying you didn't. We sound like a contest of who knows the worst conditions. I didn't want to start something like that. I just came here to help Vincent.

GLORIA: Well, everything is between Vince and me; I didn't intend to go into my dingy family heritage for you.

BARBARA: I didn't know you had a brother and sister that died.

GLORIA: Well, now that you do, I'm sure you won't let it trouble you any.

BARBARA: Of course it will. Maybe I can think that that helps to explain how you feel about—

GLORIA: It doesn't explain anything about me!

BARBARA: It's you're so—I honestly don't know! You tell me all that like you were *proud* of your sister dying and *proud* of—

GLORIA: *I AM! PROUD! I am proud!*

PATIO/PORCH

by Jack Heifner

Set on the porch of an old Victorian house somewhere in Texas, *Porch* depicts the relationship between Dot and Lucille. Dot is a cranky, irritable old woman who dominates her spinster daughter. Throughout this one-act play their dialogue reveals the frustration and mutual torment they inflict on each other.

This scene takes place at the end of the play. Dot is complaining about the noisy fan Lucille uses in her room. The argument quickly turns into accusations and threats as mother and daughter attack each other with their arsenals of long-standing grievances.

DOT: That thing sure is loud.

LUCILLE: Yes.

DOT: I can hear it running at night. I can hear it running in your room.

LUCILLE: So?

DOT: You have this buzz fan for coolness, don't you?

LUCILLE: Sure.

DOT: I don't suppose you use it to drown out noise?

LUCILLE: What?

DOT, yelling: What do you do in your room?

LUCILLE: Nothing.

DOT: Good.

LUCILLE: Why good?

DOT: I'm glad to know nothing's going on that I shouldn't hear. I don't want you sneaking around on me. You don't do sneaky things do you, Lucy?

LUCILLE: No . . . well, no. Well, sometimes Helen comes over. It's not sneaky, she just comes in.

DOT: When? Helen? Helen who?

LUCILLE: Helen . . . from down the block. I went to school with her and sometimes she drops by when she gets off work at the movie.

DOT: At night?

LUCILLE: She works at night.
 DOT: She comes over often? Comes in when I'm asleep?
 LUCILLE: What difference does it make? It's my room. I can ask over whoever I like.
 DOT: Can you? Can you? Well I know what you like! I suppose you have men in?
 LUCILLE: What?
 DOT: Men! Men! For God's sake, get rid of this buzz fan! Turn it off! Get rid of it!
 LUCILLE: Why?
 DOT: I want to know what's going on! I won't have a Water-gate under my own roof! Turn that evil fan off! Off! *Lucille turns the fan off.*
 LUCILLE: Okay, it's off.
 DOT: What have you done to me?
 LUCILLE: Nothing. I had a friend over.
 DOT: Keep that Helen out! And don't bring men in here. I don't want strangers in my house.
 LUCILLE: It's mine, too.
 DOT: Daddy left it to me.
 LUCILLE: He was my daddy!
 DOT: He was my husband! *A pause.* I earned this house. I deserve it. It's mine. Children aren't supposed to own their own homes.
 LUCILLE: I'm not a child. I wish I had my own house.
 DOT: How would you get your own home? Huh? How'd you pay for it? What money you have belongs to me. I won't give you the money.
 LUCILLE: You won't even give me enough to take a bus ride.
 DOT: I've given you money. I gave you nine ninety-five and look what you bought.
 LUCILLE: I get your point!
 DOT: Do you? Do you, Lucille? Your own home? Are you crazy? How in the world would you get one?
 LUCILLE, *this is an outcry of white anger and force . . . she makes perfect sense:* I could walk across the street and marry old man Ferguson. I could do that. After all, that's what you did. Marry an old man, sit on his porch, have a kid, got your own home. What you did didn't take any brains or money. I could walk across the street, do what you did, sit on Freddy's porch and stare at you. I could do that! Unless it's God's will

that I should stay here for forty-five more years letting you make me miserable.
 DOT: You wouldn't marry that old man!
 LUCILLE: Sit on your porch and watch.
 DOT: You don't even know old man Ferguson that well.
 LUCILLE: I do. I talk to him at night, when you're asleep. Other times I wander down the block and see Tommy Vickery's daddy. Another nice widower. Ferguson's old, Vickery's young . . . both are lonely. So am I.
 DOT: Well, you have yourself quite a nightlife. I'll bet you even hang out with the beatniks at the *Dairy Queen*?
 LUCILLE: Oh, Mama, I have the time of my life when it's past your bedtime.
 DOT: What makes you think any man would want to marry you?
 LUCILLE: Out of pity. Out of loneliness. I don't know.
 DOT: No, you don't know. You see, the whole world's lonely, Lucille. That's the state of things. That's no reason to wander up and down the block talking to the menfolk. Shame on you! That's no reason to marry one.
 LUCILLE: But you did! Marry one!
 DOT: That don't make it right. It was the one mistake I ever made, but I recovered . . . got over it.
 LUCILLE: And got a house.
 DOT: Oh, for Pete's sake, Lucy . . . hold your horses! I'm an old woman. I'll be dead soon.
 LUCILLE: How soon?
 DOT: What?
 LUCILLE: How soon? If you make it short, I might stay around to see the end.
 DOT: That's silly, you make it sound like you want me dead?
 LUCILLE: Right now I wish I knew an elephant.
 DOT: You've certainly got a smart mouth. I didn't raise you to be a tart!
 LUCILLE: No, well, what did you raise me for?
 DOT: Because . . . because you were born, you came along, you were there.
 LUCILLE: Well, that's why the chicken crosses the road, Mama. Because it's there. Like Freddy Ferguson's.
 DOT: Well . . . well . . . I don't know what to say.
 LUCILLE: Finally.

DOT: Well . . . this is a fine how do you do. Well, I think it's time for you to go in. You've had too much exposure, Miss.

LUCILLE: I don't want to go in, thank you.

DOT: Well, I won't sit here and talk to a crazy. You ought to get inside, get on some clothes and get ahold of yourself.

LUCILLE: Freddy's bound to be back soon with my magazines.

DOT: You wouldn't do that, would you? Leave poor old me and marry that poor old man?

LUCILLE: I'm the one who's poor.

DOT: I'll be gone soon. Just wait. Then you can have this house, run all over creation at night in your silly swimsuit, get yourself involved with a hot rodder . . . if you want. I won't know. Right now I need you.

LUCILLE: For years you've said, "Lucy, don't go, I need you." So I didn't go and all you've needed me for has added up to nothing. I need to go. I got a lot to do.

DOT: After the Lord takes me, you'll be on your own.

LUCILLE: Finally.

DOT: And I'll bet you find out there's nothing to do, Lucy. Nothing is what there is to do. There's no need to go looking for anything you can't have right here. This is the best of nothing. Oh, I know you have dreams. Wild ideas put there by your newspapers and magazines about what's going on in the world. But this is the best place to be, Lucy . . . out here on this porch. When I go to my eternal rest, you can rest right here. Swing on the swing. Rock in the rocker. Watch the world go by. The view is so much better here than it is from old man Ferguson's. But don't go outside . . . in the world, Baby. You're a little person and you might get lost. *Dot reaches out and touches Lucille . . . as a mother would touch a child.*

LUCILLE: I'm just going to read, Mama. Read the news of people who got robbed, arrested or shot. People who got out and did something.

DOT: Good for you.

LUCILLE: Good for me?

DOT: After all, you wouldn't want to wander off. I might start to die and you wouldn't be here. I'm ready to go. Been just waiting for ages. I can't wait to get to heaven. Every night, before I go to sleep, I pray, "Dear God, take me." I've seen the world for seventy some odd years. Seen my neighbors come and

go. Watched Tommy Vickery swipe my roses and old man Ferguson trot off to the post office. See Lucille grow from a little girl into a grown woman. I've had an eyeful. Seen it all. Everything there is to see from this porch. Yes, Lord, I'm ready to come to heaven and see what the angels are up to! *A short pause.* Well . . . I've had it with the porch. I'm going inside, Lucille, and wait. *Dot puts down her fan and rolls her wheelchair inside the house. We hear Dot yell from inside: Don't run off! Lucille picks up Dot's fan and begins to fan herself.*

LUCILLE: *to herself:* Sit and rock. Sit and rot. *A short pause.* God, it's hot. *A short pause.* God, I got to be going. *Lucille puts down the fan, goes to the steps of the porch and begins to step off. She does not leave. The sound of ice cream truck is heard again playing "Pop Goes The Weasel."*

DOT, *yelling from inside the house:* Lucy? Is that the ice cream man again? Lucille? *A short pause.* Yoo hoo? Lucille? Come put me in the bed! *Lucille stares out at the world beyond the steps . . . torn between leaving and the calls from Dot. A short pause.* Lucy? I need you. Are you there? *A short pause.* *She sings.* "When I'm calling you . . . ooh . . . ooh . . . ooh . . . ooh . . . ooh." *She yells: Yoo-hoo? Lucille turns and exits into the house.*

AND MISS REARDON DRINKS A LITTLE

by Paul Zindel

ACT I

The play focuses on the lives of three sisters. Anna is a science teacher in a junior high school. Catherine is an assistant principal in the same school. Ceil, formerly a teacher, has become an administrator in the Board of Education. The setting is Anna and Catherine's apartment. They are unmarried, clearly embarked on their respective spinsterhoods. Anna has been teeter-