

LYDIE BREEZE

by John Guare

Lydie (15) - Gussie (22)

The Play: The time is 1895. The place is a dilapidated beach house on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts that once served as the center for an idealistic commune (such as those popular with the Transcendentalists during the middle of the 19th century). A scandal of adultery, murder and suicide shattered the noble dreams of this Utopia in years past, however. Patriarch of the commune, Joshua Hickman, killed his wife's lover and was sent to prison. Now pardoned, he has returned to his home in an attempt to unravel the twisted tragedy of his life. Among the other players in this web of corruption: Lydie, his younger daughter (the namesake of her mother, who committed suicide); Gussie, his older daughter (secretary-mistress of a U.S. Senator); and Jeremiah Grady, the long-lost son of the murdered lover. As the mystery is unraveled, we not only discover much about the Idealism that runs deep in the American character, we also learn about the frailty of that character.

The Scene: Gussie has just arrived, dressed in very elegant yachting clothes. Lydie, her plainer sister, has just confronted her about being a whore.

Special Note: The actors may wish to read John Guare's *Gardenia*, which depicts the early years of many of these same characters.

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GUSSIE: I dress as good as any girl can! (*To Lydie.*) Feel my dress. Can you feel the silk?

LYDIE: I never felt silk.

GUSSIE: Well, that's English silk, goddamit. And these are my beautiful English shoes. And these are beautiful English hairpins. I am doing so fine!

LYDIE: You went to England?

GUSSIE; Those English make me so mad. Can you imagine— We tell England to frig off in 1776. Not till 1894 does England finally decide to open an embassy in Washington. But Amos says I must forgive. So Amos and I had to return the honor and go over there.

LYDIE: Did you meet the Queen? Is everything gold?

GUSSIE: I've been in Buckingham Palace. Saw Prince Edward. The Prince of Wales. He's Queen Victoria's son. The next King. We talked.

LYDIE: You talked to the next King of Wales?

GUSSIE: England! England! Are you an idiot? We were talking back and forth. If I ever get to England, I wouldn't mind looking him up. Buckingham Palace.

LYDIE: What did you talk about?

GUSSIE: Most of our chat revolved around the theatre. When you meet people of that royal ilk, you have to have cultural things to talk about.

LYDIE: The theatre?

GUSSIE: We saw *Frankenstein*. It was worth sailing an ocean for.

LYDIE: *Frankenstein*?

GUSSIE; Frankenstein is this wonderful scientist who cuts up old corpses...

LYDIE: Right on stage?

GUSSIE: He makes this monster who's controlled by all the dreams of the parts he's made out of. Other people's dreams. Other people's nightmares. It scares the bejesus out of you. To hear all those tight-lipped English tiaras and white ties in the audience screaming like residents of Bedlam.

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LYDIE: Is he hideous? Is he ghastly?
GUSSIE: No... Dr. Frankenstein must've got hold of the best-looking parts of all the corpses because the monster is...truly attractive. He pulls you toward him.
LYDIE: I don't want to go near him.
GUSSIE: In the last scene, the doctor goes up to the North Pole where he's chased the monster!
LYDIE: They have the North Pole right on stage!
GUSSIE: And they walk across the ice! And it's quiet... It's very still... (*Gussie spins Lydie around.*) And you hear the wind swirling... And you know the monster is out there somewhere... Wooooo... Wooooo...! (*Gussie hides.*)
LYDIE: Gussie? Gussie, don't scare me! (*Gussie sneaks up from behind Lydie.*)
GUSSIE: And the monster leaps up... (*Gussie grabs Lydie. Lydie screams with pleasure.*) And he grabs Dr. Frankenstein and pulls him down, down under the ice. (*Lydie and Gussie fall to the floor.*)
LYDIE: No!!
GUSSIE: And the monster looks out into the audience in the dark theatre. "Come, my enemies, we have yet to wrestle for our lives. My reign is not yet over." Every evil ugly thing that ever happened woke up inside me. Ma killing herself. Pa going to prison. I got asthma worse than ever.
LYDIE: (*Hugging Gussie.*) I hate the evil ugly things inside of me.
GUSSIE: You're a goddamn little saint. You never did anything bad.
LYDIE: Ma killed herself. Maybe over something I did.
GUSSIE: You were just a baby. Ma killed herself because she was still in love with the other man.
LYDIE: Dan Grady. I know the name of Dan Grady.
GUSSIE; Pa killed Dan Grady and Pa went to prison. And then Pa came home and then Ma died. It was all for love. All for love.
LYDIE: Gussie, were you ever afraid of Pa?
GUSSIE: Yes, I was afraid of Pa. After he came home from jail, I could never sleep at night. If I was a bad girl, I was sure Pa would come in and kill me the same as he did to Dan Grady.

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LYDIE: Is that why you left home?
GUSSIE: (*Rise.*) I dream all the time I'm going to be killed. I'd rather be killed by a stranger than have Pa be the one.
LYDIE: Don't say that about Pa. (*Gussie takes a comb from her purse and goes to the mirror to adjust her hairdo.*)
GUSSIE; Sometimes I wish they had left Pa in that Charlestown prison. What'd he ever do for any of us? Look at you. What's he doing for you? You can't read.
LYDIE: I can. A bit.
GUSSIE: You get decent grades in school?
LYDIE: I don't go to school.
GUSSIE: Do you know your ABC's?
LYDIE: Beaty teaches me.
GUSSIE: Those letters you write to me.
LYDIE: They're love letters.
GUSSIE: I can't read your letters. Zulus in Darkest Africa send out better love letters.
LYDIE: It's very hot in here.
GUSSIE: (*Taking Lydie's arm.*) How're you going to learn shorthand if you don't even have any longhand?
LYDIE: (*Pulling away.*) I don't want to learn shorthand.
GUSSIE: Don't you care about your life?
LYDIE: I care! I'm fine!
GUSSIE: Don't Pa care?
LYDIE: Pa cares.
GUSSIE: Some people even say Pa is not your real father. Amos Mason says Dan Grady is your father. If he is, I envy you.
LYDIE: You never come home. You never answer my letters.
GUSSIE: Baby, maybe I have kind of ignored the family the past few years. But I come back—see this—I think Ma'd like you travelling with me.
LYDIE: But Ma is here. I hear Ma's voice everyday.
GUSSIE: I only hear my own voice. And my own voice is saying that I want to learn shorthand so bad. That's the ticket. When I went down to Washington, I just showed up at the Capitol building. Amos

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could've thrown me out with a gold piece. But he didn't. He took me in and he's taught me to read and recognize the good things. *(She strokes Lydie's face.)*

LYDIE: Your hand feels so nice.

GUSSIE: Oh, baby, I'd love you to meet Amos. You'd score a bull's eye, Lydie. A pretty young girl in Washington. And you could keep me company.

LYDIE: But I have to stay here with Pa...

GUSSIE: Pa!? Pa lost Ma. Pa lost me. Pa lost Amos as a friend. Pa won't even notice you're gone. Baby, electricity's been invented. I'm introducing you to power. You got a bag? I'm packing you up and taking you away.

LYDIE: I don't want to be like you. I don't want to go into bed with everybody.

GUSSIE: What do you know about going into bed.

LYDIE: Beaty tells me about going into bed.

GUSSIE: Beaty don't know nothing! Hills of beans have flags in them announcing what Beaty knows!

MY SISTER IN THIS HOUSE

by Wendy Kesselman

Christine (early 20's) - Lea (late teens)

The Play: Christine and Lea are sisters, who are employed by the Danzards (mother and daughter) as maids. Having been raised in convents because their mother, also a maid, could not keep the girls with her, they have come to rely on one another. While growing up, they were frequently moved from one convent to another by the mother. When Christine became old enough, the mother insisted on placing her in a household to earn money. Young Lea has recently come of age and finally gotten placed in the same household as her beloved sister. What begins as the happiest of arrangements—for Christine and Lea are finally together again—turns into a chilling psychological thriller. Playwright Kesselman based her drama on a famous murder which took place in Le Mans, France, in 1933. It is the same case that so fascinated Jean Genet and led to his important play, *The Maids*. In Kesselman's play, not only do we see the contrast in social class structure (the rich and cruel Danzards against the poor young maids who only dream of a better life), but we also see a contrast in relationships (mother-daughter, sisters, employer-employee). The closeness the sisters share leads to an exclusive relationship that is complicated by sexual confusion. Psychologically tormented by the Danzards, the girls become alarmingly desperate in their situation and are driven more and more to one another. Finally, at the powerful and intense climax of the play, Christine and Lea strike back.

The Scene: This scene (the third in the play) takes place shortly after Lea's arrival at the Danzard home. It has been years since the sisters lived together and they are just now beginning to feel a bonding that will fuse their relationship. It is early morning.

Special Note: An examination of Jean Genet's *The Maids* would be a helpful exploration for this scene.