

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-

ing on the edge of a nervous breakdown since the death of her mother some months earlier. Catherine has taken to drink. (She has also taken to hiding raw chopped meat in the candy box since Anna has become a vegetarian.) Four days before this scene takes place, Anna had some sort of sexual relations with a male student. His parents learned of this event and lodged an angry complaint with the school. Ceil, trying to contain the scandal that could damage her own career, convinces Catherine to send Anna to a mental institution. During the course of the evening old resentments are revealed (Ceil enticed and then married the one beau that Catherine ever had) and fresh wounds are inflicted. The scene begins with Ceil's entrance.

CATHERINE: Well, well, well. I never thought you'd show up. Of course, that's not quite true.

CEIL: I had asked to come.

CATHERINE: Oh, sure, but it wouldn't be the first time your busy, busy schedule would cancel out a lovely family dinner. What do they have you supervising down there at the Board of Ed? The Christmas Party? It's October, so I guess they're . . . starting to . . . make the tree decorations.

CEIL: I had intended to call before this.

CATHERINE: Oh yes, I'm sure. Super-intended. Do you realize you haven't been here to see us since we put Mother in her grave? A couple of lousy phone calls in seven months, you little bitch.

CEIL, *after a suitable pause*: Where's Anna?

CATHERINE: She's "sedated." Do you want a Manhattan?

CEIL: Yes, please. She hasn't been teaching since last Thursday?

CATHERINE: Oh, cut the crap, Ceil.

CEIL: Look, I wouldn't be here now if Hamilton didn't call and . . .

CATHERINE: Sister—that tone of voice of yours butchers me, dear.

CEIL: He suggested . . .

CATHERINE: Sibling, sweets—your penultimate shortcoming has become the fact that you've taken so many graduate education courses you've ended up with euphemism of the brain. No

body does anything at that Board without checking with you first, the overdressed Sheena of the Blackboard Jungle.

CEIL: Jesus Christ, you forget!

CATHERINE: Forget! Nobody forgets! Every teacher in that demented little school looks at me and silently burps in my face every day of the week. Where would you be if it wasn't for that powerhouse of a sister of yours? Know what the faculty has nicknamed you this year? Well, it's "Superman." You have finally transcended womanhood entirely.

CEIL: Catherine, what's the matter with Anna?

CATHERINE: Matter? Who says there's anything the *matter*? Just because she started crying now and then—like right in front of her classes? I don't know where you got the idea something was the matter. Well, maybe she just wanted a little change of routine like Mrs. Miniken, at Oakwood High. Remember Mrs. Miniken? Mrs. Miniken, who leaped from the school roof, and splattered herself all over the handball courts. Now, that was a change of routine. Mrs. Miniken—splat—all because of some marital difficulties, wasn't it? And she taught Family Living.

CEIL: She hasn't been the same since Mama died, has she?

CATHERINE: Now look, Ceil. We might as well be honest about this whole thing. The only thing you're disquieted about is how much nuisance Anna is going to cause you. How much trouble. How much mortification. How much money. I mean, let's face it. That's what's got you out of your condominium, isn't it?

CEIL: Actually, Catherine, the only unkind remarks I've heard lately have been about you.

CATHERINE: Oh, is that so? Well, I'm not interested. In fact, you may not even have to worry much longer about my nepotistically endowed assistant principalship because I'm thinking of quitting and becoming a waitress. I could do with a little honest work for a change.

CEIL: They say you've started to drink a little.

CATHERINE, *involved in making a huge batch of Manhattans*: What a preposterous and cruel disestimation. Who would hoot such a thing about me? Could it be one of your old friends from around here? One of our mutual friends before your nuptials? Was it Mr. Pollack in Apartment 2A who beats his wife be-

cause she's having sex with the Fuller Brush man? Or was it Mrs. Pedowicz in 4C who beats her husband because he's having sex with the Fuller Brush man?

CEIL: It doesn't matter who said it.

CATHERINE: What do you mean, it doesn't matter? They've got *one hell* of a nerve.

CEIL: Actually, it was someone from your own school.

CATHERINE: Someone from that bibliophilic looney bin? Who? Mrs. Drisser, that pygmyess with the face like Toto, the kissless bride? Or Lipschitz who wears the same suit for six months and putts around with gorgonzola of the breath? That whole pack of academically defunct eternally matriculated and fuckingly overpaid nuts and what are they saying? Miss Reardon drinks a little. Jesus Christ! *She pours some Manhattans*.

CEIL: Look, if you've already had too much, I'll come back in the morning.

CATHERINE: No! *Beat*. Well, maybe it was Mama's death that got her. And maybe it wasn't. I thought she got over that nicely, considering . . . don't you, Ceil? *She takes the candy box and nibbles at its contents intermittently*.

CEIL: Was she all right on the trip?

CATHERINE: Oh, she did fine, just fine, till we got to Rome, that is; then she picked up on this flea-bitten ugly cat. There she was . . . running around the whole city picking up cats: black ones, green ones, yellow ones, three legged ones, one eyed ones, picking up any mangy sad thing she could get her hands on . . . while I was trying to get picked up by some of those two legged smooth Italian Tom cats.—Oh, I'm sorry, Ceil. I must sound crude to a happily married woman like yourself. Happily nuptiated to a big handsome man like Edward. How's Edward? Does he ask about me? *Beat*. Oh, we mustn't go into that—must not we? Anyway, the night before we were going to leave for Naples for the tourist barge back, I finally found the Trevi Fountain and I was tossing my eighty-third coin when Anna found this huge white cat, a tortured-looking thing, with a face like Goya's "St. Sebastian" . . .

CEIL: El Greco's . . .

CATHERINE: *Somebody's* St. Sebastian—and she picked it up saying right into that hairy, festooned face, "nice little pussy, pussykin, nice little pussy, pussy" and the dear little thing re-

sponded by burying its front fangs into Anna's wrist. Right down to the bone. *She takes a huge mouthful of chopped meat*.

CEIL: What the hell are you eating? Chop meat? *Raw chop meat?*

CATHERINE: It's *chopped* meat, not chop meat. Fanny Farmer Chopped Meat.

CEIL: Are you crazy? What on earth for?

CATHERINE: Hold your water—your rushing the story. So anyway, we laughed the cat bite off and go to Naples for this Christoforo Trawler to get back here in time for school which was to begin on September something or other.

CEIL: School started September 16th.

CATHERINE: Yes, Ceil, you're utterly correct. Utterly precise as usual. September 16th. And the afternoon before we docked around September 3rd . . . try to pardon me for this temporal equivocation—docked in New York, Anna took an afternoon nap and had a nightmare—an afternoon-mare, if you will—and that evening she fainted in the dining room. To tell the truth, I was ready to pass out myself from the table-mates we got stuck with. I knew I should have tipped the Maitre d' on the gang-plank—this whole table of stag matrons who were so desperate they were sprinting after the busboys like piranha in evening gowns.

CEIL: Why did Anna faint?

CATHERINE: Well, Anna came to the conclusion she had rabies. But the ship's doctor told her not to worry because if her symptoms were those of rabies she'd be dead in three days—which was sort of a fun prognosis. But three days later we were back here and she was still having nightmares about some pregnant guppy or something, and we ran from doctor to doctor, each of whom told her not to take the anti-rabies injections because they were dangerous and anyway the odds were a million to one that she had it. But she insisted on the shots so for fourteen days we went to this senile quack down at the Board of Health and he stuck fourteen needles in her stomach, right *here* . . . pow, pow, pow!

CEIL: My God, how painful.

CATHERINE: On the contrary, Anna delighted in them. She looked like *Somebody's* St. Sebastian *smiling*.

CEIL: Then she was all right?

CATHERINE: No, she got worse. So I took her to a private senile quack and he put her on tranquilizers so she could get back to school, back to the beloved classroom, and he said everything she was bellyaching about was in her head. Anyway, I thought Anna was all right then or I wouldn't have let her go back to work. So she began once more to face the cheerful loving children. But they began to stalk her.

CEIL: What do you mean *stalk* her?

CATHERINE: In class. First they did the spit-ball routine—wang! Then the airplanes—zooooom! And the cow sounds . . . mooooo! Mooooo! And the big thing last week, they were pinning flowers on her skirt without her knowing it and Scotch-taping little notes on her back like: *One of my tits is rubber and Please mount me*. Do you have any idea how embarrassing it can be to be the assistant principal of a high school and have your own sister arrive at the faculty conferences wearing a *One of my tits is rubber* sign on her back? It got so I had to check her clothes every period.

CEIL: Why do you think they began to do . . . dirty things to her?

CATHERINE: Well, Jesus Christ, you've got us teaching condoms in kindergarten, positions in the third grade, abortion in the sixth—perverts, nymphos, satyrs, and succubi in the eighth— If you ask me it's a wonder our kids aren't balling in the aisles.

CEIL: Did Anna do anything to encourage the things they did?

CATHERINE: I think she wore lipstick.

CEIL: Catherine—the boy . . .

CATHERINE: Oh, the boy! I was wondering how long it was going to take you to get to that. The cherub.

CEIL: She sent for him.

CATHERINE: The succulent seraphim who was present when Anna broke down—the McCloud boy . . .

CEIL: He's saying . . .

CATHERINE: You want to know about that little shit, I'll tell you. The nicest biographical detail on his grammar school record was that in the third grade he was caught pissing on a doll. During his first year in junior high he's taken dope, sold porno, and drew pictures of rhinoceri fornicating on the cover of his world geography text book. Granted he quieted down this term. He only punched a truant officer in the gut and just winks a lot

as he walks around with his fly open. One of the semi-literate teachers in the English department dubbed him the Intermedable Tumescence. *She takes a big mouthful of meat.*

CEIL: Would you stop eating that?

CATHERINE: No. If I don't get some protein into me before Anna un-sedates herself, I'm going to collapse.

CEIL: What the hell does Anna have to do with your eating that disgusting raw meat?

CATHERINE: Well, it's like this—ever since she broke down we're not allowed to eat flesh. You see, she's caressed vegetarianism. She made me throw out every piece of meat we had in the house. Even the bouillon cubes.

CEIL: You're joking.

CATHERINE: Yeah, I'm joking, but you'd better like zucchini because that's what you're getting for supper. Saturday we had sauteed zucchini, Sunday we had boiled zucchini, Monday night for variety we called it squash. I can't even cook a cod fish cake—"You've got no right to kill anything," she says. Monday night she rescued a cockroach out of the toilet bowl. It isn't bad enough we're paying over two hundred bucks a month for a cop with cockroaches, I have to have a sister who acts as a life-guard for them.

CEIL: She's afraid of death . . . maybe the way Mama died . . .

CATHERINE: Oh, for Christ's sake, she's always been like that and you know it. Remember when Mama took us to St. Mary's Bazaar and we put her on that little ferris wheel. There was only enough money for one, and Mama said she could go alone . . . remember?

CEIL: Yes.

CATHERINE: Jesus, I'll never forget her face when that motor started and she went up and up and up.