

LYDIE BREEZE

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.

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(Early morning. CHRISTINE and LEA'S room is almost dark. They are asleep. The alarm clock rings. CHRISTINE turns is off. She reaches out to touch LEA, curled up beside her. Gently she touches her shoulder, strokes her hair.)

LEA: *(Turning toward CHRISTINE.)* Is it time?

CHRISTINE: Sleep, turtle. Go back in your shell.

LEA: But—

CHRISTINE: Sleep. There's time. I'll wake you. *(LEA turns over again. She is holding the small blanket their Mother has made. CHRISTINE covers LEA'S shoulder with the blanket. Shivering, she gets out of bed, stands on the cold floor. She puts on her shoes.)* Lea...it's almost six.

LEA: Mmmm. Another minute, Christine. Just one more.

CHRISTINE: Just one—all right. *(At the sink, she washes her face and hands. She shivers from the cold water, fixes her hair in the mirror. She removes her long white nightgown and puts on her maid's uniform. She goes over to the bed. Tickling LEA'S feet.)*

Come on now. Come on. *(She pulls the blanket off LEA.)*

LEA: *(Sitting up.)* It's freezing here. Is it always like this?

CHRISTINE: *(Laying out LEA'S uniform on the bed.)* Always.

LEA: Everywhere you've been?

CHRISTINE: Everywhere.

LEA: *(Putting on her shoes.)* I polished the banister yesterday. Did you notice how it shines?

CHRISTINE: I noticed. *(To herself.)* I thought it would be easier with two of us.

LEA: You're disappointed, aren't you? You're unhappy with me here. Tell me.

CHRISTINE: Don't be silly.

LEA: I can't seem to do anything right. I can't seem to please you.

CHRISTINE: You please me, turtle. You please me more than anything.

LEA: You're so quick. You get things done in a minute.

CHRISTINE: You're fine the way you are.

LEA: *(Struggling with her nightgown.)* Maybe this was a mistake. I

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slow you down.

CHRISTINE: Stop it, Lea.

LEA: *(Still struggling.)* Sister Veronica always said I was too slow. She said I'd never be as quick as you.

CHRISTINE: What did she know?

LEA: *(Helping LEA take off her nightgown.)* That was a long time ago. I've gotten over all that now.

LEA: You were famous at the convent. Your sewing! They still have that dress you made for the Virgin Mary. She's still wearing it.

CHRISTINE: And yet I remember, when I was at Saint Mary's, I could never go down the stairs like the others. One, two, one, two. I could never take a step with my left foot. It was always my right, my right, my right. I used to envy them running down the stairs when it took me forever.

LEA: Tell me a story, Christine. Just one—before we go down.

CHRISTINE: Which one?

LEA: When I was little.

CHRISTINE: You're still little.

LEA: No, I mean really little—you know—the story with the horse.

CHRISTINE: Again? Don't you ever get tired of it.

LEA: No—tell me.

CHRISTINE: *(Making the bed.)* When you were just a tiny thing, Maman sent me out one day to get bread. You came with me, the way you always did. And as we were walking, you let go of my hand and ran into the street to pick something up.

LEA: Tell it slower. You're telling it too fast.

CHRISTINE: It was a *long* narrow street—you remember—on a hill. At the top of the street a horse and carriage loaded with bottles was coming down and galloping right toward you. I ran into the street and pulled you across and pushed you down into the gutter with me. *(Falling down on the bed with LEA.)* What a noise when the horse galloped by! Everyone was screaming. Maman said the horse had gone mad. And when we stood up, we were both bleeding. But it was the same wound. It started on my arm and went down across your wrist. Look—*(She lines up her arm with LEA'S.)* We have it still.

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LEA: And Maman—what did she say?

CHRISTINE: Oh Maman. Maman was terrified. You know how her face gets. She screamed at us.

LEA: And then—then what happened?

CHRISTINE: Then there was the gypsy—Mad Flower they used to call her.

LEA: And what did she say?

CHRISTINE: She said—oh you—you know it so well.

LEA: But tell me again, Christine. Tell me again.

CHRISTINE: They're bound for life. Mad Flower said. Bound in blood. *(A bell rings.)*

THE RIMERS OF ELDRITCH

by Lanford Wilson

Patsy (mid-teens) - Lena (mid-teens)

The Play: The Middle Western Town of Eldritch is the scene of a murder. But who is the murdered man, and what are the circumstances surrounding his death? To solve this mystery, we learn much about the relationships of the inhabitants of the little town, among them: Cora Groves and her lover, Walter, a young man who works at her café; Nelly Winrod, a strong-willed woman who mistreats her aged, retarded mother; Eva Jackson, a dreamy crippled girl, and Robert Conklin, the boy who cares for her. Poetic in spirit, *The Rimers of Eldritch* ultimately depicts the bigotry and hypocrisy of small-town life.

The Scene: Patsy tells her friend Lena about her soon-to-be wedding.