

Opening Scene from Migdalia Cruz's ANOTHER PART OF THE HOUSE

TIME: A morning in February, an afternoon in April, and a night in June—
1895.

PLACE: A modest farmhouse and corral in a small town, Santa Clara, in the province of Las Villas, in Cuba. The inside walls are white and thick, the rooms airless and still, except in MARIA JOSEFA's bedroom where a window is always open and there is sometimes a breeze. The exterior is the color of sunburned wheat. It is dry and hot.

Note: Everyone dresses in black, except for MARIA JOSEFA, who wears white. Born in 1898, García Lorca completed *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* in June of 1936. In August of 1936, he was assassinated by Franco's Falangist Civil Guard, never to have seen this work produced...

ACT ONE

One Morning, just before dawn.
In the darkness, we hear the sound of bells
tolling and women crying.

The Voice of BERNARDA ALBA

(An urgent, hissing whisper; to herself)
I silence myself...only Jesus weeps before God.

The Voice Of MARIA JOSEFA.

Wicked! More than wicked!

The Voice of PONCIA

A tongue like a knife!

(At the church, we see the daughters of BERNARDA ALBA leading a funeral procession by Don Antonio's coffin. As the DAUGHTERS enter holding candles, THEY kneel.)

BERNARDA

¡Alabado sea Dios! (Blessed be God!)

The DAUGHTERS

Sea por siempre bendito y alabado. (Forever blessed and holy.)

BERNARDA

¡Descansa en paz con la santa compañía de cabecera!
(Rest in peace, with the souls of the departed watching over you.)

The DAUGHTERS

¡Alabado sea Dios! (Blessed be God!)

BERNARDA

Con el ángel San Miguel y su espada justiciera.
(With Saint Michael the Archangel and his sword of justice.)

The DAUGHTERS

¡Descansa en paz! (Rest in peace!)

BERNARDA

Con la llave que todo lo abre y la mano que todo lo cierra.
(With the key that opens all and the hand that closes all.)

The DAUGHTERS

¡Descansa en paz! (Rest in peace!)

BERNARDA

Con los bienaventurados y las lucecitas del campo.
(With the blessed saints and the little lights of the fields.)

The DAUGHTERS

¡Descansa en paz! (Rest in peace!)

BERNARDA

Con nuestra santa caridad y las almas de tierra y mar.
(With our holy charity and the souls of the earth and the sea.)

The DAUGHTERS

¡Descansa en paz! (Rest in peace!)

BERNARDA

Concede el reposo a tu siervo Antonio María Benavides y dale la corona de tu santa gloria. (Grant repose to your servant Antonio María Benavides and give him the crown of your sacred glory.)

ALL

Amén.

BERNARDA

Requiem aeternam donat eis domine.

ALL

Et luz perpetua luce ab eis.

(AMELIA is holding up MAGDALENA, who is near fainting and is wailing about the death of her father, Don Antonio.)

MAGDALENA

Why did he have to die, Amelia?! Why not her?! He's the only one who ever loved us.

AMELIA

Sssh, sssh, ssh, Magdalena. We can't question God. It was his time, his time for rest. And freedom. Sssh, sssh, ssh. You still have me.

(We hear the sound of the crashing sea and seagulls, but only MAGDALENA hears them. MAGDALENA screams, then faints.)

(To her other sisters)

Help me!

BERNARDA ALBA

(Entering and rushing forward to AMELIA & MAGDALENA)
Magdalena! Behave yourself! Everyone is watching us. Fainting is vulgar—for guajiros. In good families, fainting is only allowed in your heart.

(To AMELIA)

Keep her quiet, Amelia.

AMELIA

Yes, mother.

MAGDALENA

(Fearfully; to AMELIA who continues to comfort her)
Didn't you hear them?! The seagulls calling...when they come to the mountains, it means something...

(ADELA, MARTIRIO and ANGUSTIAS watch PEPE EL ROMANO who strums a guitar with no strings, but the sound we hear is of a Bach cantata on guitar. Lights up dimly on MARIA JOSEFA dancing to the cantata—we see only her flowing white gown, not her face. MARTIRIO follows ADELA closely and pokes her when SHE sees that ADELA is watching PEPE EL ROMANO.)

ADELA

What?!

MARTIRIO

What? Your eyes are what...and who you look at with them and what you think when you do. I know what you think when you do, Adela.

ADELA

You're the one who always watches me, Martirio. Don't you have better things to do? I didn't chase your little boyfriend away. You scared him off yourself. Poor Martirio... Always standing by the window waiting for him to return to you...We'll have blood fall instead of rain before that will ever happen.

(MARTIRIO slaps ADELA, who moves away from her.
ANGUSTIAS comes up to MARTIRIO.)

ANGUSTIAS

Pepe's beautiful, isn't he?

MARTIRIO

They all seem beautiful—once you've buried one...or one buries you.

ANGUSTIAS

You're too pretty to be so bitter.

MARTIRIO

And you're too ugly to be my sister.

(ANGUSTIAS walks quickly away from MARTIRIO)

BERNARDA ALBA

(Hissing)

Sssh! All this chatter at a funeral is too much.

(Lights cross to the dining room, where PONCIA, who is crying quietly, chops the head off a small, finch-sized bird on the banquet table for Don Antonio's post-funeral reception.)

PONCIA

(Singing to herself; comforting herself)

“Little birds make sweeter soups, when set free from little coops.
And pounded well into a sauce, thickened by tears and lovers' loss.”

(The lights cross to MARIA JOSEFA, a once elegant woman of 80, who is picking one of the two locks on her bedroom door. SHE is dressed for a wedding: A flowing white dress, beautiful jewelry. Flowers in her hair. SHE speaks to PEPE the SHEEP, who is resting beside her. PEPE is also decorated with a wreath of flowers.)

MARIA JOSEFA

Don't worry, my love. We'll be out soon. Out on the edge of the sea. We will marry there because by the sea there's nothing to keep us from our love. No horrible daughter or trembling maids to run from. Just my love and the waves to envelop us, comfort us by following our rhythms. So much comfort.

PONCIA

Good-bye, Evaristo. Such a mess, but all your parts, all mixed together, will be luscious. I wonder why we only eat this well at funerals? Weddings aren't nearly so appetizing.

MARIA JOSEFA

(Rattling the door in frustration and shouting through it.)

Bernarda!

PONCIA

(Speaking conspiratorially to the bird SHE's just killed.)

She's a crafty one. Could have been a locksmith—if women were allowed such work. Her fingers work a bolt from the inside out. From the inside out,

she can open any door. That's why I change the locks every few days. It keeps us both busy. Listen...

(We hear the sound of MARIA JOSEFA's bedroom door rattling and being pounded more aggressively.)

See what I mean? That sound's as familiar as a death rattle caught in an old man's throat.

MARIA JOSEFA

(SHE gives up on the door and sits beside the lamb.)

She is not a comfort. My daughter is a tumor. A boil. A sore that is growing over this house. I have medicine for it though. Don't you worry. It won't get us, Pepe. We have the falling night—that's our time.

(PEPE moves to her lap and begins to suckle from her breast.)

Oh, Pepe, that's just what I needed—my breasts get so full for you. They say I have no milk in these dried up old things, but they don't know because they never tasted my dryness. In eighty years, my nipples have only grown harder and smoother—like young boys watching horses mate—up and with full attention. Sucking is its own lullaby.

(PEPE makes love to her and as SHE reaches climax SHE shouts)
Release me! Release me! Release me!

PONCIA

She can call all she wants, but no one in this house listens. Except me. I enjoy the sound of her despair. It reminds me of myself.

(Pouring blood from the bird into a pitcher of water on the banquet table.)

Mmmm! This will be delicious added to the sugar cane water. And the sores it will heal...What do you think, little bird? Hard to think with no head, I suppose...And even harder to keep things cool in this place, but the sugar water always stays cool. I wonder why? Maybe it just doesn't stay around long enough. Sweet things disappear here.

MARIA JOSEFA

(From inside her room)

Release me, Poncia! You know how to do it.

PONCIA

It's your daughter who wants you dead, Doña Maria—not me. But she's too good a Christian to steal your breath.

MARIA JOSEFA

(From inside her room)

Such a nice man, Don Antonio was. I don't know why he ever married her. It's like marrying a sharp stone that cuts when you caress it. But you know of his caresses, don't you, Poncia? La Poncia, the faithful slave. I have a clear view of the corral from my window...and I hear all the animals inside...

PONCIA

You're never getting out of that room, Doña Maria, so what does it matter what you hear?!

MARIA JOSEFA

(From inside her room)

You disappeared a few years back...Where'd you go, Poncia? I missed you so. Gone almost a year. She beats me more when you're not around.

PONCIA

I take your blows for you. Isn't that enough to buy your silence? Maybe if you were quieter, she'd let you out now and then. Wouldn't you like that?

MARIA JOSEFA

Bernarda!! Bernarda!!

PONCIA

She can't hear you.

MARIA JOSEFA

Lucky for you, Poncia, that I believe in love, so I would never give you away. Yes...pure, physical love, like the creatures of the sea have. Sometimes I think it's shame that keeps me in this room. How could I have given birth to such a monster? I should have had her in the ocean and given her to those sea creatures. Would they have made a meal out of her or made her their queen? Then the sea would have the smell of stillness... Is your child still alive, Poncia? Maybe you should drown it. But dark, little babies don't drown as well as white ones, do they? They know how to survive.

PONCIA

(Making the sign of the cross)

Yes, we do.

MARIA JOSEFA

(Singing in the same sing-songy way as PONCIA's little bird song)
"Virgin white, coffee brown, or the blackest midnight blue?
What color baby did La Poncia give birth to?"
With Don Antonio's Creole white and your mother's African brown—
anything could appear...

PONCIA

Why am I everyone's dog in this house?

(Lights cross to BERNARDA at the threshold to the house.)

BERNARDA

(To herself)

A moment alone. To breathe. Everyone watches me. Wants something from me. But I can't hear them. Not today. Today words have no meaning.

(MARTIRIO enters behind her.)

BERNARDA & MARTIRIO

No one understands sadness better than I.

(BERNARDA freezes as MARTIRIO continues.)

MARTIRIO

But no one cares what I feel. My feelings are the pounding lead of the Sun's heat. I feel a fever in my heart.

(ANGUSTIAS enters behind her.)

MARTIRIO & ANGUSTIAS

It's never been hotter.

(MARTIRIO freezes as ANGUSTIAS continues.)

ANGUSTIAS

But Pepe brings a breeze with him. His sweat is like honey, stronger even than the scent of death. Don Antonio shouldn't have been left in the Sun for so long.

(ADELA enters behind her.)

ANGUSTIAS & ADELA

A smile was melted onto his face.

(ANGUSTIAS freezes as ADELA continues.)

ADELA

I never saw my father smile like that before. A full, swollen smile. He must have held his breath, when he saw Saint Michael coming for him. Took all the air in the village with him.

(AMELIA enters , still supporting MAGDALENA.)

ADELA & MAGDALENA

I can't breathe.

(ADELA freezes.)

AMELIA

Once we're alone, you'll feel better.

MAGDALENA

Somehow, I doubt that.

(Lights come up on the Alba family entering the house...)