

**Later**

Corinne Jacker

**Premiere:** Phoenix Theatre, New York City, 1978**Setting:** The Dowsons' summer house on the seacoast of Rhode Island

Ms. Jacker says, "This is a play about women and water." Molly's husband Malachai died during the year. Her two adult daughters, Laurie and Kate, have come to the family's summer house for their traditional Labor Day weekend. Laurie is married with two young sons. Her older sister Kate has never been able to find a relationship that measured up to her image of her parents' marriage. A self-proclaimed neurotic, she has been seeing a therapist for years. Old patterns are broken by Malachai's absence, and over a weekend of clam-digging, sailing, and ocean-gazing, all three of the women take stock of their lives.

**KATE**

I can sail. As well as any man. Better than most. My father taught me—tacking, charting a course, no yawing when I'm at the rudder. Our secret language. Malachai and me at the boat house, while Molly sipped iced tea under her sun umbrella and Laurie's skin shriveled up in the club pool. A boat needs attention. Scraping, sanding, painting, varnishing. One June day when it was hotter than this, I worked for seven hours straight on the hull, and he hugged me and said, "No son could've done better." I knew he meant that if a man was going to get stuck with daughters, he might as well have one like me. And he hauled out the thermos with rum and tea in it, and he poured me a cupful, and he said, "Drink it down, you'll feel cold as an icicle." Oh, I did. It turned my veins into refrigerator coils. Gooseflesh came out on my shoulders, and down my arms, I started to shiver until my teeth clacked together. But he knew what to do. He rolled the sleeves of my T-shirt down

as far as they'd go, and he stuck me into the sun, rubbing my hands together and hugging me to stop me from shaking. And then, he said, "Oh, well, you're a girl after all, aren't you, Katey, honey." And I lay my head against his shoulder and wished there was a way to change that. I never felt that cold again. Not till he was dead, and we were alone, in the viewing room, and the air-conditioning was blowing so fiercely. We went out, Laurie and I, to get drunk, having dumped Molly on some cousin or other, and I ordered rum and iced tea, because I wanted to shiver, I wanted the temperature of my blood to go down below zero, so it would freeze and clot, and stop. But I couldn't get away from that music. The beat kept making my heart pump. I got drunk. My God was I drunk, and my cheeks got red, and the blood kept right on moving. I couldn't get cold enough. I could have taken a bath in ice cubes and I wouldn't have gotten cold enough. . . . Well, Katey's a girl after all.