

2b - Bums in the Attic



I want a house on a hill like the ones with the
gardens where Papa works.
We go on Sundays, Papa's day off.
I used to go. I don't anymore.
You don't like to go out with us, Papa says. Getting
too old? Getting too stuck-up, says Nenny.
I don't tell them I am ashamed—all of us staring out
the window like the hungry. I am tired of looking at
what we can't have.
When we win the lottery . . . Mama begins, and then

I stop listening .

People who live on hills sleep so close to the stars they forget those of us who live too much on earth. They don't look down at all except to be content to live on hills. They have nothing to do with last week's garbage or fear of rats. Night comes. Nothing wakes them but the wind.

One day I'll own my own house, but I won't forget who I am or where I came from. Passing bums will ask, Can I come in? I'll offer them the attic, ask them to stay, because I know how it is to be without a house.

Some days after dinner, guests and I will sit in front of a fire. Floorboards will squeak upstairs. The attic grumble.

Rats? they'll ask.

Bums, I'll say, and I'll be happy.

Sandra Cisneros, *The house on the Mango Street*, 1983