

LOONS

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Bradley Hayward

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SYNOPSIS: An elderly couple waits at the end of a long wooden dock for the loons to greet them for another summer at the lake.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 1 WOMAN)

GEORGE (m).....80 years old and feels every single day of it.

EDNA (f)Also 80 years old, but feels far younger on the inside.

SCENE

A long wooden dock that sits at the edge of a peaceful lake.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Loons was selected as one of the winners of the 8th Annual Lakeshore Players 10 Minute Play Festival. It was first presented by Lakeshore Players in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and was directed by Doug Dally with the following cast:

GEORGE Jim Westcott

EDNALinda Wolf

AT RISE:

GEORGE enters at the far end of a long dock with a picnic basket in one hand and two lawn chairs in the other. Having recently turned 80, his body is far older than he would care to admit. He shuffles slowly down the dock, using the chairs as a makeshift cane. He arrives down front, looks out over the lake, and squints. He puts down the picnic basket and then opens both lawn chairs. He sets them down side by side, facing front, as he has done countless times before. He dusts off the bottom of his chair and then slowly lowers himself onto its sagging bottom. He turns his head sideways and cups his ear toward the lake.

GEORGE: Do you hear that, Edna?

EDNA: *(Off-stage.)* I'm right here, George.

GEORGE: *(Louder.)* I said, do you hear that?

EDNA enters from behind. She's also 80, but moves with the agility of someone half her age. She's as spry as ever and bounds down the dock, brimming with energy.

EDNA: And I said, I'm right here.

GEORGE: I hear the loons. The sun's barely up, but I can hear them calling.

They both listen, but there's nothing but silence.

EDNA: I don't hear them.

GEORGE: Aren't they lovely?

EDNA: The sunrise is lovely. The lake is lovely. But I don't hear anything, George.

GEORGE: My goodness, they're awful loud this year.

EDNA: Oh, dear.

GEORGE: *(Louder.)* I said, they're awful loud this year!

EDNA: Not again.

GEORGE: *(Shouting.)* They must be very close!

EDNA: It's your hearing aid, George.

GEORGE: (*Clutching his ear.*) Very close, indeed!

EDNA: That's interference you hear. Not loons.

GEORGE: (*Looking overhead.*) Odd that I don't see them anywhere!

EDNA: Turn down your hearing aid.

GEORGE: It sounds like they're swooping at my head!

EDNA: Turn down your hearing aid!

GEORGE: Perhaps I should turn down my hearing aid!

EDNA: There you go.

GEORGE: I think it might be interference!

EDNA: That's right.

GEORGE: And not the loons!

EDNA: Sometimes I think you're the loon.

GEORGE turns down his hearing aid and relaxes. He listens again.

GEORGE: Oh, good. For a moment, I thought I was the loon.

EDNA: You are, George.

GEORGE: (*Laughs.*) Maybe I am.

EDNA: But so am I.

GEORGE: I guess you haven't arrived yet.

EDNA: Ah, here it comes...

GEORGE: You always say you haven't arrived until you hear the loons.

EDNA: Yes, George.

GEORGE/EDNA: But they'll come.

GEORGE: You know, I think they wait until you get here to start singing.

EDNA: They're not singing, George.

GEORGE: (*Laughs.*) I know, I know. They're mating.

EDNA: You old loon.

GEORGE: A couple of old loons, waiting for a couple of old loons.

EDNA: Funny how they know just when to arrive.

GEORGE: Still, I think they see you coming. And they sing.

EDNA: Just wait. They'll come. Now, eat your breakfast.

GEORGE: I think I'll eat my breakfast.

EDNA: Your hearing aid, George. Now it's too low.

GEORGE: I'm so hungry.

EDNA: I don't want you to miss them.

GEORGE bends at the waist and reaches toward the picnic basket. All of a sudden, he grabs his back in pain.

GEORGE: Ooooh-aaaah-ooooh.

EDNA: Now, George.

GEORGE: I'm fine. I'm fine.

EDNA: It's that chair. How many times do I have to tell you? You need more support for that back of yours.

GEORGE: I can hear you, Edna. So don't start in on me. I've been coming to this lake for 40 years. And for 40 years, I've parked my rump in this chair to wait for the loons.

EDNA: I know, George.

GEORGE: I see no reason to change.

EDNA: So it said on your business card.

GEORGE: If everything goes as planned, I figure this chair will give out the same time I do.

EDNA: Please, George.

She sits. GEORGE opens the basket and takes out a sandwich. He peels back the plastic wrap and takes a bite.

GEORGE: Now, that's good!

EDNA: Of course it's good. You have it lathered in mayonnaise.

GEORGE: I know, I know. It's not good for me.

EDNA: You have to watch what you eat.

GEORGE: But when I watch what I eat, I find myself watching what others eat. And then I drool. I'm far too young to be drooling, Edna.

EDNA: You're eighty.

GEORGE: Besides, it's light mayonnaise.

EDNA: Light mayonnaise is about as good for you as light cigarettes.

GEORGE: And at this point, what the hell does it matter?

EDNA: Stop saying such things.

GEORGE: When I go, I want it to be a surprise. Nothing worse than slipping away slowly. A heart attack should take care of that problem just fine.

EDNA: George!

GEORGE: I'm sorry, Edna. But you're the one who says surprises make life worth living.

EDNA: Not those kind of surprises.

GEORGE: Not that I'm much for surprises. That's your department.

EDNA: *(Smiles.)* You're a good sport, that's for sure.

GEORGE: Although I did get you that one time.

Suddenly, he bursts into laughter.

EDNA: Yes, you did.

GEORGE: Oh, the look on your face!

EDNA: Don't remind me.

GEORGE: "Fire, Edna! There's a fire in the kitchen!"

EDNA: *(Laughs.)* I remember.

GEORGE: So you come racing out of the shower in a panic!

GEORGE/EDNA: "I don't smell any smoke!"

GEORGE: And I say, "That's because you only have a nose for potpourri!"

EDNA: That was to cover up all the other smells.

GEORGE: Still, I got you to run out in the front yard, wearing nothing but your underpants!

EDNA: The idea was to surprise me, not the whole neighborhood.

They both laugh uproariously for some time. Slowly their laughter subsides.

GEORGE: That was a good one.

EDNA: Yes, it was.

GEORGE: Unlike all my other surprises.

EDNA: Now, George. We're having a good time. Let's not—

GEORGE: Surprise, I don't know how to cook.

EDNA: Stop.

GEORGE: Surprise, we'll have to live here a bit longer.

EDNA: Don't do this.

GEORGE: Surprise, I can't make you a mother.

EDNA: Please.

GEORGE: I lied to you, Edna.

EDNA: Pardon?

GEORGE: I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done it.

EDNA: You lied?

GEORGE: The mayonnaise.

EDNA: *(Confused.)* The mayonnaise?

GEORGE: It's full-fat.

EDNA: *(Starts laughing.)* Oh, George! Is that what this is about?

GEORGE: I shouldn't have lied. An old fool, I am.

EDNA: You're not.

GEORGE: A goddamn fool!

EDNA: Hush. You'll scare the loons.

GEORGE stops. He listens for the loons.

GEORGE: They're not here yet.

EDNA: They'll come.

GEORGE: Now, your surprises, they take the cake.

EDNA: So I like to have a little fun.

GEORGE: "Surprise, you're wearing my dentures."

EDNA: April Fools.

GEORGE: "Surprise, I found us a little cottage."

EDNA: And you fixed it up real nice.

GEORGE: "Surprise, I have cancer."

Pause.

EDNA: Yes. That one took me by surprise, too.

GEORGE: I was supposed to go first, you know.

EDNA: That's not how it works.

GEORGE: While I was eating bacon, you had egg whites. I worked in the sun, and you stayed out of it. When I asked if you missed smoking, you said—

GEORGE/EDNA: Every day.

GEORGE: "But I'd rather miss it every day than miss every day."

EDNA: I read that on a fortune cookie.

GEORGE: But I kept on smoking. So what the hell am I doing here?

EDNA: I can't answer that, George.

GEORGE: And why did you leave me?

EDNA: It's not like that.

GEORGE: Wherever you are, I'd like an apology.

EDNA: What is there to be sorry about? You're alive. That's wonderful!

GEORGE: I'm a sorry excuse for the living. Do you know that I haven't done a single load of laundry since you've been gone? Not even a sock.

EDNA: Your poor podiatrist.

GEORGE: I go out on Mondays and buy myself a whole new wardrobe.

EDNA: At least you're getting out. That's good.

GEORGE: Six shirts, six pants, six briefs, and six pairs of socks.

EDNA: Only six?

GEORGE: And on Sundays, well...I draw the curtains and let it all hang out.

EDNA: (*Laughs.*) Some things never change.

GEORGE: But it's just not the same without you.

EDNA: Still, you came.

GEORGE: You didn't think I'd come up here, did you? I saw it in your eyes. Don't think I didn't see it. I promised to come as soon as the snow melted. I promised to watch for the rickety step. I promised to keep the porch light on, because "what's the use of living if you're going to do it in the dark?" I promised to keep going. To keep living. With your hand in mine, I made all these promises to you. And you smiled. But not the smile you gave me when I first asked you to dance. It was the one you gave me when I said I didn't know how to cook. A smirk that said, "You just don't want to." Then you closed your eyes and were gone. Just like that. Gone forever, with the wrong smile on your face.

EDNA: Oh, George.

GEORGE: Not that I blame you. I'm not the impulsive type. That was all you.

EDNA: Perhaps. But you always came along for the ride.

GEORGE: And I've never been one to keep my promises.

EDNA: You keep the ones that matter.

GEORGE: I would have smirked, too. Hell, I probably would have laughed until my teeth popped out. (*EDNA chuckles.*) But did you really think that I'd throw away your memory? Throw away the summer? Throw away the loons? So here I am. As promised. That's right, I'm here. Right where I said I would be. The porch light is on. I'm here, goddammit! Now where the hell are you?

Suddenly, he's interrupted by the sound of loons in the distance. He stops to catch his breath. He looks out over the lake.

GEORGE: (*Continued.*) Do you hear that, Edna?

EDNA: Yes. I hear it.

GEORGE: The loons.

EDNA: That's them all right.

GEORGE: *(Gently.)* Goddamn. *(He reaches over and holds onto the armrest of her chair.)* You've arrived.

EDNA touches his hand, and he reacts to her presence.

EDNA: I already told you, George.

GEORGE: Surprise, Edna.

GEORGE/EDNA: I'm right here.

They look out over the lake as smiles creep onto their faces. The loons continue as the lights fade.

THE END

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