

THE REAPER

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Raegan Payne

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Heuer Publishing LLC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

ISBN: 978-1-61588-267-0

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PUBLISHED BY

**HEUER PUBLISHING LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011
THE REAPER**

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SYNOPSIS: Four nursing home residents face death in all its terrifying fluffiness. Trapped inside the game room, Molly, Harold, and James fend off The Reaper, otherwise known as the nursing home’s resident feline. The cat has the uncanny ability to predict who dies next, and these three won’t let him take them without a fight. Or they’ll sacrifice Agnes. She doesn’t care.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(TWO MEN, TWO WOMEN)

MOLLY75 - The ring leader. Real beauty. Is going to take out death before it takes her.

HAROLD80 - Chicken shit. Molly follower/worshiper. Is resigned to whatever death wants, but will fight for Molly.

JAMES82 - Not scared of death. Fuck death. Alpha male. Has beaten it before and will beat it again.

AGNES86 - Is ready for death. Wants it to take her. Mousy. Has given up. Bravely confronts it in what she believes are her last moments.

SETTING:

The Game Room.

COSTUMING:

The script requires James to wear a white sweater.

Notice: This work contains language that may not be appropriate for all audiences. As copyright owner, the author permits the director to modify such language as necessary, as long as that substitution does not alter the meaning of the dialogue.

WORLD PREMIERE

The Reaper was presented at the 2011 Hollywood Fringe Festival as part of a group of one acts by Raegan Payne titled “Sweet Nothings.” It ran at The Hudson Guild Theater in Los Angeles from June 23-25. Scott Bloom directed.

ORIGINAL CAST:

MollyJane Heitz
HaroldRobert Pine
JamesPeter Jason
AgnesApril Shawhan
Intercom Voice.....Johnny Whitworth

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Lights up.

Molly, Harold and James sit on re-purposed cushions behind a fort made of two ottomans, a wheel chair and a tipped over card table. An old static-y TV in the corner running a bad soap opera on low would be a nice touch. Harold clutches chess pieces to his chest, Molly has knitting needles posed at the ready and an upturned fruit bowl on her head. Fruit peppers the stage. James sits calmly eating a banana. Periodically, they take turns peering over the top of the make-shift barricade.

MOLLY: This is it boys. The moment I knew would eventually come, but never wanted to see. We're outnumbered, there's no help in sight, imminent death approaches. This is bad. This is real bad. It's him or us. I say this time it's him.

HAROLD: Outnumbered? It's a cat.

Molly and James shush Harold loudly.

MOLLY: *(Disbelieving she has to repeat this.)* A cat. A cat. Garfield was a cat. Tom was a cat. Morris was a cat. That is not a cat. That is death steely eyed and menacing.

JAMES: She's right. I looked death in the face in The Great War and it looked just like that feline.

MOLLY: See.

HAROLD: *(To James.)* You weren't in "The Great War." You were in Korea.

JAMES: Are you saying the Korean War wasn't great?

Harold shakes his head and looks around for the first time. He drops the chess pieces.

HAROLD: Jesus, we ruined the game room.

MOLLY: The game room Harold? Are you really concerned about the game room right now? May I remind you that that cat has been found lying on the last 50 people who died in this little rest home. Some people say he's predicting it. I say he's killing people and then sitting on them like a hunter who's bagged a deer.

JAMES: I've seen it happen in the jungle. Once he's chosen you. You're a goner.

MOLLY: Bethesda Harper was in absolutely perfect health. Right as rain last Thursday morning. Looking beautiful in a baby blue shawl. I told her that. Her only mistake in life was giving that cat a cat nip mouse that very morning. Cat wouldn't leave her alone. Nap time comes, she lays down, cat goes and lays on her chest and kills her. The cat has to die.

HAROLD: It's just a cute cat Molly and... I've never killed anything before.

MOLLY: Fine. That's why it's fortunate James is here. He's a killer. Killed lots of things.

JAMES: Damn straight.

HAROLD: Maybe it was just Bethesda's time to go?

MOLLY: Bethesda had been to the doctor the day before for a kidney stone and the doctor said that besides the stone, the sensitivity to light, mild headaches, and a slight heart palpitation she was in perfect health. We should all wish for that level of good health. If it happened to her it could happen to any of us sitting here.

JAMES: I just find it remarkable that the cat decided to descend on us during a game of spades. To find us defenseless like that shows real intelligence. Methodical. Diabolical. The nurses all at lunch. Uncanny this creatures abilities.

MOLLY: It's time to end this...this...game...of...game of...this game of...

HAROLD: *(With sensitivity.)* Cat and mouse? Are you trying to say cat and mouse?

There's a loud meow and everyone freezes. Suddenly Harold tries to run and James grabs him across the chest. Molly peeks over the barricade. She sits back down.

MOLLY: We have to kill him. He's stalking back and forth outside the room. One of us must be on his list.

JAMES: If only they hadn't taken my glock when I entered this hell hole.

Molly reaches out to touch James arm in sympathy. Harold looks on jealous.

MOLLY: This isn't going to be the end for me. *(Pause.)* Or any of us. Damn that ball of ratty fur. He's not taking me. I have a plan. I've been thinking about this at night when I see his tiny shadow pass my door. We'll poison him.

HAROLD: With what?

Molly reaches into her gown and pulls out a hand full of white pills.

MOLLY: I've been saving these for weeks.

Harold and James lean in closer to get a better look at the pills.

HAROLD: Aren't those your cholesterol pills? *(Pause.)* If the cat had a blocked artery...but...you want to do some damage... I don't think that will kill him. *(Pause.)* Besides, you should be taking those Molly. You're going to hurt yourself.

Molly snatches her hand away from Harold.

MOLLY: We're going to crush these up and slip them into some wet cat food. Cats can't resist wet cat food. It's like crack.

HAROLD: We don't have any wet food.

JAMES: It's an okay strategy Molly, but I think we'd be better off, considering current logistics, to set up a neck snare and snap his neck.

MOLLY: Or we could just stab him with these knitting needles.

HAROLD: Someone would have to get close enough to the cat to stab it. If you get close to the cat doesn't that mean you're putting yourself at risk. Given that the cat seems to kill people that get close to it. *(James starts tearing strips of paper from a random piece lying on the floor.)* What are you doing?

JAMES: Who attacks the cat is a life or death choice. When a decision is life or death, I find, it's best to draw straws.

James continues making his straws - he's making too many. Harold looks over the wall and then looks at Molly.

HAROLD: My life has been too short.

MOLLY: You're 80.

HAROLD: Yes. I had another 20 good years at least. I'm not ready for this.

Harold starts to breathe faster.

MOLLY: Don't think you're going to convince me to do the deed by having a panic attack.

HAROLD: I wouldn't want you to risk yourself.

MOLLY: Drawing straws is fair and square.

HAROLD: I wouldn't let you do it.

MOLLY: I'm a planner not a doer.

HAROLD: Believe me, I know.

MOLLY: I mean for God sake I'm younger than you. You should go first.

HAROLD: I know.

MOLLY: I have so much more life to lead. Life to give.

JAMES: Organ donors give life. Not that they'd take either of your organs. You've past expiration.

HAROLD: *(Sharply.)* Thank you James. *(Harold looks at Molly who has shrunken into a contemplative ball.)* Is there anything you wanted in life Molly? You know something you wanted before you go...

MOLLY: I just don't want to go.

HAROLD: No regrets? Disappointed hopes or dreams? Things you wish you had done?

MOLLY: Nope. Wait. Actually...I wish...I wish I had slept around in high school.

HAROLD: What?

MOLLY: I feel like I wasted some prime sexual years because I was afraid of what people would think.

HAROLD: Your regret is... that you wish you had been a whore.

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MOLLY: No, Harold. Girls always get classified as “whores” even if they’re just with one person, but maybe they’re just sexually liberated. I wish I had more fun. Been a slut.

Harold just stares at Molly as she visualizes being a slut.

HAROLD: I think it's important for women, even mature women, to feel sexually liberated as well.

MOLLY: I guess.

James gets distracted and starts to peel an orange he found on the floor.

HAROLD: Aren't you going to ask me...

MOLLY: Ask you what?

HAROLD: If there was anything I regretted.

MOLLY: Was there?

HAROLD: Yes. If the cat took me right now I would regret being timid sometimes. I wish I had been more honest or maybe up front with some people. For example... *(Pause.)* I should have told you from day one...

JAMES: I regret never punching my brother in the face. What a dick! Did you know in India the people put their dead on huge wooden platforms so that the buzzards can pick them apart. It's called a sky burial. Damn convenient I say.

HAROLD: *(Sarcastic.)* Thanks.

JAMES: Your welcome. In Peru a tribe of forest people... Yanamama's or Yomamas or...I forget their name...doesn't matter really. Anyway these forest people take the bones of a person who's died, grind it up to bone meal, cook with it, and eat it. Like consuming the wisdom of their ancestors. Damn queer if you ask me.

HAROLD: We let you represent us in other countries.

JAMES: Four tours of duty. Too bad you never saw action. Would have toughened you up.

HAROLD: Where are your straws?

JAMES: My? What? Wait. I think...

James starts to collect his straws which he dropped when he picked up the orange. Molly squints into the distance.

MOLLY: Someone's coming.

James crouches low in a defensive posture.

HAROLD: Who is it?

MOLLY: I don't know. I can't make them out.

JAMES: Given the speed of movement and the fact that they are ten feet away I estimate we'll have contact in five minutes.

Harold squints. Takes his glasses from his shirt pocket and pops them on.

HAROLD: From the pink floral nightdress and fuschia lipstick I'd say that's Agnes.

JAMES: Ahoy Agnes!

MOLLY: *(Suddenly in a loud hushed voice.)* Agnes get down! The cat's on the prow!

A hunched, mousy, and shockingly pink figure shuffles in stage left. Her head is high though her body is stooped.

HAROLD: Agnes, it's best not to go around this wall.

JAMES: Death awaits.

James quickly turns to look over the fort at the cat.

AGNES: I know.

MOLLY: Come. Sit with us Agnes.

Harold picks up an apple on the ground.

HAROLD: Have an apple.

AGNES: I have no need for fruit Harold.

HAROLD: Don't be ridiculous Agnes. *(Pause.)* Everyone has need for fruit.

Agnes passes close to the group. Molly grabs her hand.

MOLLY: Agnes, sit with us. You look so pretty in that flower house coat. Is it new?

AGNES: I wear this every day. It hasn't been washed in a week.

MOLLY: My nose would have never told me that Agnes.

HAROLD: Absolutely right. Would have never known. Looks freshly pressed.

James turns back around.

JAMES: What stinks?

Harold and Molly shush him.

AGNES: It doesn't matter. It's my time.

MOLLY: Don't be silly Agnes. You can't seek the cat. The cat seeks you. Like right now. The cat seeks us.

Agnes tries to pull away.

AGNES: I think he's waiting for me.

MOLLY: He's not waiting for you. He would have found you in your room. He's probably here for James.

HAROLD: One can only hope.

Agnes stops pulling and turns to stare at the group. James pops a section of orange into his mouth.

AGNES: I want him to be waiting for me. I'm finished. I'm tired. Very tired. And bored. This place is boring. Same faces. Most interesting thing is waiting to see who will die next and then talking about how it happened and who will take their room. I hate board games. Don't like TV. Can't read anymore. I've lost everyone who... *(Pause.)* No one comes to visit. And they shouldn't have to - they should live their lives. Have fun. I did. Everything hurts now and it doesn't get better. No, don't feel sorry for me and...*(Molly*

stands and tries to hug Agnes, but Agnes signals her to stop.) No hugs necessary. This is the next chapter. Aren't you curious? (Molly, Harold, James shake their heads no.) I am.

Agnes walks past the fort and into the darkness.

MOLLY: *(Weak.)* Agnes. Please don't...

Molly, Harold and James all look over the wall.

JAMES: That cat is going to show no mercy.

MOLLY: Oh, shut the hell up James!

HAROLD: Yes. Please. *(They all stare over the wall as the seconds tick by. Molly periodically sucks her breath in quickly or gasps. Finally, she's quiet.)* Well. That was anti-climactic.

MOLLY: What did you expect Harold? The cat to go for her jugular and then drag her away to feed. It's an eight pound cat. No, Agnes is going to lie down and then the cat will steal her life.

JAMES: Good. Then his blood lust will be satiated.

They all turn around and sit back down on their cushions. Molly takes the bowl off her head and starts putting the remaining fruit back in it. Harold helps. He doesn't look at anyone in particular.

HAROLD: If I died today. If I died today I would...I would regret not... *(Takes a deep breath. Steady. Go.)* I would regret not telling you that I love you. I loved you from the moment I saw you. *(Molly and James stop and listen, but Harold doesn't look up.)* You were wearing a white sweater. *(James looks at the sleeve of his white sweater.)* I remember it. My heart still leaps a little each time you wear it, which is, of course, a bit dangerous now. But I like it. I think about you every day all the time. And arrange my day so I bump into you. So I love you. And I thought it was important that you knew. That I love you. In case the cat shows up.

Molly reaches a hand tentatively towards Harold.

JAMES: I love you too!

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James throws his arms around Harold.

Blackout.

THE END

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