

The Reaper

By: Raegan Payne

Four nursing home inmates face death in all of it's terrifying fluffiness...

Characters:

Molly - 75 The Ring Leader. Real Beauty. Is going to take out death before it takes her.

Harold - 80 Chicken Shit. Molly follower/worshiper. Is resigned to whatever death wants, but will fight for Molly.

James - 82 Not scared of death. Fuck death. Alpha male. Has beaten it before and will beat it again.

Agnes - 86 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"

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 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.
(MORE)

MOLLY (CONT'D)

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 dear.

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 had said that besides the
stone, the sensitivity to light,
mild headaches, and that 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

Thank you James. At least one person
believes me.

JAMES

He picked off Tony this weekend on
his way band practice. Said goodbye
to me in this very room. One hour
later they found him lying on his
back outside the bathroom, fear etched
across his face, and that cat sleeping
on his chest.

Harold gives a strangled gasp.

JAMES (CONT'D)

He's just like the Predator.

MOLLY

Yes. Thank you James.

Molly gives Harold a "see" look.

JAMES

He even looks like Predator 'cept fluffier.

MOLLY

Thank you James.

JAMES

Did you ever see that movie? They showed it last week at movie night.

She turns and stares at James a moment and then turns back to Harold.

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. Especially 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.
Cat's 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.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

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 breath 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.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
 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.

MOLLY
 No, Harold. Girls always get classified as "whores" even if their just with one person, but maybe their 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
prowl!

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 everyday. 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.

AGNES (CONT'D)

No hugs necessary. This is the next
chapter. Aren't you curious?

Molly, Harold, James shake their heads no.

AGNES (CONT'D)

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.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

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 lay 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.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

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.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You were wearing a 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!

James throws his arms around Harold.

Blackout.