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MILLIONS OF CATS

adapted for the stage by Brian Guehring
based on the Newberry Honor book by Wanda Ga'g
a play for a 1m/4f

Draft # 2.05
2005 post-production draft

Three sisters lovingly exaggerate an old family story about their grandparents and millions of cats. The Old Man will do anything to make his wife happy. When he goes to get his wife a cat, he comes to a hill with millions of cats. The Old Man can't decide which cat is the most beautiful, so he takes all of cats with him. The cat herd causes big problems, then gets into a fight about which one is the most beautiful. One poor scruffy kitten (who didn't think she was pretty at all) is soon the only cat left. This kitten, the Old Woman and the Old Man then live happily ever after.

This script was developed through improvisation with director **Kevin Ehrhart** and dramaturg **Laura Quest** in August 2005 with the following actors: **Amanda Kibler, Brian Priesman, Janeve West, Joie Bauer, and Suzanne Withem.**

This play was then produced by the Omaha Theater Company for Young People for school groups and public audiences in the fall of 2005 with the following cast and production team:

CAST

Old Man	Konrad Case
Old Woman	Erin Bragg
Sisters/Puppeteers	Stephanie Kidd, Suzanne Withem, Natalie Tiehen

PRODUCTION TEAM

<i>Director:</i> Kevin Ehrhart	<i>Costume Designer:</i> Sherri Geerdes
<i>Set Designer:</i> P. Sprite Haston	<i>Light Designer :</i> Bill Van Deest
<i>Development Dramaturg:</i> Laura Quest	<i>Cat Consultant:</i> Lucas the Bitter

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Human Characters

OLD MAN	An quiet old man who wants to please his wife
OLD WOMAN	A lonely old woman who enjoys beauty
OLDER SISTER	The oldest sister who is always right
MIDDLE SISTER	The middle peacemaking sister
YOUNGER SISTER	The youngest and most energetic sister

Cat Puppet Characters*

PERSIAN CAT	A gentle, shy long hair Persian
SPHYNX CAT	A paranoid hairless sphynx
SIAMESE CAT	An elegant, intellegent, regal Siamese
CALICO CAT	A curious, brave Calico
ANGORA CAT	A talkative, flirtatious Angora
TABBY CAT	A scruffy, confident street cat
SCRUFFY KITTEN	A homely, quiet little kitty

**In the original production,*

OLDER SISTER manipulated the PERSIAN CAT and Sphynx puppets

MIDDLE SISTER manipulated the SIAMESE CAT and CALICO CAT puppets

YOUNGER SISTER manipulated the ANGORA CAT and TABBY CAT puppets

The SCRUFFY KITTEN puppet was manipulated by many actors (including Old Woman)

Locations:

The clean sweet home of the Old Woman and Old Man
The town pond
The town hills
The town forest
Cat hill

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MILLIONS OF CATS

Scene 1: Storytelling

(Curtains open to reveal a large photo album. OLDER SISTER, MIDDLE SISTER, and YOUNGER SISTER enter and see audience)

SISTERS

Hello!

YOUNGER SISTER

We're so glad you're here.

OLDER SISTER

We hope you are ready to hear a story.

MIDDLE SISTER

Because we want to share with you one of our old family stories.

YOUNGER SISTER

It's a very whimsical story.

MIDDLE SISTER

Everytime our family gets together, we tell it.

OLDER SISTER

And it gets bigger and bigger each time its told

MIDDLE SISTER

Its a story about millions of cats.

YOUNGER SISTER

Billions of cats.

MIDDLE and YOUNGER SISTER

Trillions of cats.

(MIDDLE and YOUNGER SISTER have cracked themselves up)

OLDER SISTER

Yes, but before we get to the cats, we have to introduce them to Grandmother and Grandfather.

MIDDLE SISTER *(To audience)*

You'll love our grandparents. They are so sweet.

YOUNGER SISTER

But they're a little crazy.

OLDER SISTER

They're not crazy. They just have lived by themselves for a long time.

MIDDLE SISTER

They have been married for a very long time.

YOUNGER SISTER

Maybe they're not crazy, but they are very silly.

MIDDLE SISTER

Our grandfather is a very old man....

(Lights come up to reveal a frozen OLD MAN)

YOUNGER SISTER

Who has a long gray beard.

OLDER SISTER

He would do anything to make others happy. He's a very kind-hearted man.

MIDDLE SISTER and OLDER SISTER and YOUNGER SISTER
But he could never make a decision.

MIDDLE SISTER

Our grandmother is a very old woman...

(Lights come up to reveal a frozen OLD WOMAN)

YOUNGER SISTER

Who always wears a kerchief over her head.

OLDER SISTER

She is an amazing cook who bakes the most incredible cakes!

YOUNGER SISTER

But she always wants everything.....

MIDDLE SISTER and OLDER SISTER and YOUNGER SISTER
...to be just perfect!

MIDDLE SISTER

They live in the nicest, coziest little cottage.

(Lights come up to reveal the cottage)

OLDER SISTER

It is right next to a peaceful little pond.¹

YOUNGER SISTER

And a hillside full of beautiful flowers.²

(OLD MAN is rocking his chair and contentedly doing nothing as the OLD WOMAN is knitting.)

OLDER SISTER

However, despite the beautiful hillside of flowers...

¹ Maybe the Older Sister opens the photo album to show the pond

² By now the photo album is open for the first scene

And peaceful pond... MIDDLE SISTER

And cozy home... YOUNGER SISTER

And very nice marriage... MIDDLE SISTER

They weren't completely happy. YOUNGER SISTER

Something wasn't quite right. MIDDLE SISTER

Something was missing. OLDER SISTER

It all started soon after our mother and father moved out of the town where my grandparents lived. MIDDLE SISTER

No it didn't. It was years after that. It all started soon after Grandfather finally stopped working and sold his big farm. OLDER SISTER

I thought it started on Grandmother's one hundred and fiftieth birthday. YOUNGER SISTER

(MIDDLE SISTER and OLDER SISTER just look at YOUNGER SISTER)

Nobody lives to be one hundred and fifty. OLDER SISTER

Sorry. It all started on Grandmother's one hundredth birthday. YOUNGER SISTER

It wasn't anyone's birthday. OLDER SISTER

That's what I heard. YOUNGER SISTER

Anyway, it started once upon a time..... MIDDLE SISTER

Scene 2: Flowers

(OLD MAN is rocking his chair and contentedly doing nothing as the OLD WOMAN is knitting.)

OLD WOMAN
It's nice to spend so much time with you.

OLD MAN
It's nice to spend time with you, too, dear.

(a few beats of silence)

OLD WOMAN
Our home looks nice, doesn't it?

OLD MAN
I think its just perfect dear.

OLD WOMAN
Thank you.

(few beats of silence)

OLD WOMAN
I love you.

OLD MAN
And I love you, too, dear.

(few beats of silence)

OLD WOMAN
What are you going to do today?

OLD MAN
Nothing much.

OLD WOMAN
Oh.

(few beats of silence)

OLD WOMAN
It sure is quiet.

OLD MAN
It sure is.

(There are a few beats of silence. OLD WOMAN sighs.)

OLD MAN
Is something wrong, dear?

No, nothing really. *(She sighs)* OLD WOMAN

Is there is anything I can do for you? OLD MAN

I feel like something is missing... OLD WOMAN

What can I get you? OLD MAN

I don't know. Maybe a cat. OLD WOMAN

No. Grandmother didn't say a cat, yet. OLDER SISTER

She didn't? MIDDLE SISTER

No. Not yet. OLDER SISTER

Oh, yeah. I forgot. First Grandmother just said... YOUNGER SISTER

I don't know what you get me. OLD WOMAN

Well, can I bring you a flower? OLD MAN

Maybe. Yes, a flower would be nice. OLD WOMAN

Of course. I will do anything to make you happy. I will cut one from the yard. OLD MAN

No. Those flowers are small and wilting a bit. They aren't quite good enough. OLD WOMAN

Oh. I could go to the flower hill and cut a flower for you. OLD MAN

Yes, that would make me happy. Please bring me a perfect flower from the hill. OLD WOMAN

A perfect flower? I will try to bring the best flower in the whole world for you. OLD MAN

Thank you. Hurry back. OLD WOMAN

(OLD MAN puts on his jacket and takes his shovel and goes to a hill covered in colorful flowers. HE finds a big yellow flower)

OLD MAN

Look at this beautiful flower. Look how yellow it is! This will make my wife happy.

(OLD MAN starts to dig out the flower but he sees another flower)

OLD MAN

But look at this pink flower. Maybe my wife would like this flower more. Which one is better?

(OLD MAN goes to dig out that flower and sees another flower)

OLD MAN

What about the purple flower? Is this one perfect?

(OLD MAN digs out the flower and sees another flower)

OLD MAN

There are so many bright, colorful flowers! My wife only deserves the best. How will I choose?

(HE shrugs his shoulders, starts to dig again and lights go down.)

(The Old Woman is rocking and knitting)

MIDDLE SISTER

Meanwhile, back in the cottage, Grandmother was wondering where Grandfather could be.

OLDER SISTER³

He was taking a long time because Grandfather...

OLDER SISTER and MIDDLE SISTER and YOUNGER SISTER

...could never make a decision.

MIDDLE SISTER

Grandfather had been gone for hours.

OLDER SISTER

When he returned, he brought back 20 different flowers.

MIDDLE SISTER

Grandmother always says he brought back 100 flowers.

YOUNGER SISTER

I heard Grandfather brought back 1,000 flowers!

MIDDLE SISTER

Yes! A thousand flowers!

OLDER SISTER

Fine. Grandfather brought back 1000 flowers.

(The OLD MAN is finishing planting hundreds of flowers all over the yard. HE has even covered the entrance to the house)

OLD WOMAN

My dear! What are you doing?

OLD MAN

I brought you the best brightest flowers to make you happy.

OLD WOMAN

I asked you to bring me one perfect flower and what do I see? Flowers here, flowers there, petals and leaves everywhere. Hundreds of flowers!

OLD MAN

I couldn't decide which one was the most perfect...

OLD WOMAN

So you brought them all.

OLD MAN

Not yet. I only brought 1000 of the flowers. I thought that if one beautiful flower would make you happy then 1000 beautiful flowers would....

³ Maybe she hands OLD man 20 flowers and then the sisters help add more flowers to the OLD MAN.

OLD WOMAN

Make me even happier. You are...

OLD WOMAN, YOUNGER SISTER, MIDDLE SISTER and OLDER SISTER
... a kind-hearted man.

OLD MAN

I'm going back now to bring back more flowers.

OLD WOMAN

No. This is more flowers than we need. We can't even get to our door now.

OLD MAN

I never thought of that.

OLD WOMAN

Its all right, dear. You're heart is in the right place.

(Sound of buzzing bees)

OLD WOMAN

What is that noise?

OLD MAN

BEES!

YOUNGER SISTER

Hundreds of bees! Swarming everywhere!

OLDER SISTER

They were attracted to the flowers.

MIDDLE SISTER

And Grandfather was allergic to bees.

YOUNGER SISTER

Once, Grandfather had been stung and he got all red and swollen....

OLDER SISTER *(cutting her off)*

Anyway, there were lots of bees.

(OLD MAN and OLD WOMAN do a dance to get away from the BEES⁴ as the BEES fly towards the flowers)

OLD MAN

Maybe I shouldn't bring you more flowers.

OLD WOMAN

Maybe not.

(BEES buzz closer)

⁴ Puppets? lights? Sound effects?

OLD WOMAN

Maybe you should take some of these flowers back.

OLD MAN

Of course, dear.