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SF PERUSALS

EXTINGUISHED THINGS

by Molly Taylor

SAMUEL FRENCH

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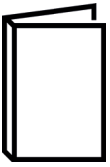
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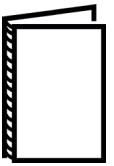
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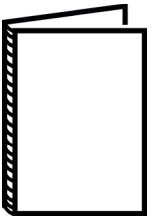
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Molly Taylor is a playwright and theatre-maker, based in London.

She began making work when she was an Associate of the National Theatre of Scotland. Her first production, *Love Letters to the Public Transport System*, toured Scotland in 2012 and won the Critics Circle Award, Adelaide Fringe 2018.

She works extensively in the participatory sector, making work with professional, and non-professional performers. She has made work for the Almeida, VAULT Festival, Young Vic, and Bush Theatre.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The action is set in the present day and the past; it slips back in time to represent moments in Alton and Evie's lives, from the 2000s to the early 1970s. Music choices used to mark these transitions are up to the creative team.

The play is set within a single day – beginning briefly at Molly's childhood home in Liverpool before moving into Alton and Evie's house, down the road.

There are shifts in register; there is Molly in 'real time' in the house, Molly recalling her experiences there as a child, and the leaps back in time where we 'see' Alton and Evie in the home they created.

Alton and Evie's house can be represented by every single item referenced in the play – or none at all. The original production focused on a few select props to tell the story, and a backdrop of an epic net curtain, a very new carpet, and two standing lamps.

Molly is the narrator, and voices all the characters in the play. A dash in the text (-) indicates dialogue between two or more characters.

As much as possible the audience should be included in the play, Molly is telling this story to them, and should choose the moments when she wants to connect.

CREATIVE LIST

Molly Taylor – Writer and Performer

Molly Taylor is a playwright and theatre-maker who specialises in creating original performances inspired by the everyday.

Recent projects include: *Cacophony* (Almeida); *Shell and Davey at the Start and the End* (VAULT Festival); *And Yet It Moves* (Young Vic Taking Part); *See Me Now* (Young Vic/ HighTide/Look Left Look Right); *The Neighbourhood Project* (Bush Theatre) and *Love Letters to the Public Transport System* (National Theatre of Scotland).

Jade Lewis – Direction

Jade Lewis is a Theatre Maker and Director. Creative Associate at The Gate 2016 and a recipient of the Boris Karloff Award on Blackta (The Young Vic). She has facilitated for Company 3, Platform Islington, The Gate, The Bush Theatre, and directed.

Directing Ccedits include: *Extinguished Things* (Summerhall, Edinburgh); *Quarter Life Crisis* (Underbelly Cowgate and UK Tour); *On The Edge of Me* (Soho Theatre and UK Tour); *War and Peace* (Southwark Playhouse). Movement Director on *Followers* (Southwark Playhouse).

Assistant/Staff Director credits included: *Nine Night* (National Theatre and Trafalgar Studios); *A profoundly affectionate, passionate devotion to someone – Noun* (Royal Court); *The Convert* (The Gate); *Iphigenia Quartet* (The Gate) and *Venus/ Mars* (The Bush).

Naomi Kuyck-Cohen – Designer

Naomi Kuyck-Cohen is a theatre designer. Credits include: *Trap Stree*t (New Diorama); *And Yet It Moves* (Young Vic); *Nightclubbing* (The Lowry & Tour); *Passin' Thru* (Lyric Hammersmith); *Dreamplay* (The Vaults); *Trigger Warning* (Tate Modern); *In My Dreams I Dream I'm Dreaming* (Theatre

Royal Plymouth); *I, Myself & Me* (Curve Theatre & UK Tour); *Rise: Macro vs. Micro* (Old Vic New Voices); *FEAST* (Battersea Arts Centre).

Zak Marco – Lighting Design

Zak Macro is a lighting designer based in London. Having studied lighting design at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Zak now works as a freelance designer and re-lighter for many venues and companies touring both nationally and internationally. His work spans Dance, Music, Theatre, and Opera.

Recent credits include: Lighting Design for *NOISE* (The Old Rep); *White Guy On The Bus* (Finborough); *Fenech-Soler* (OSLO Hackney); *The Weather Man* (Basic Space Festival); *We Can Make You Happy* (The Vaults); *Jenufa* (The ENO at Lilian Baylis); *Tomorrow* (Above the Arts Theatre) and *Death Of A Hunter* (Finborough).

Other credits include: Re-lighter and Technical Manager for *Chotto Desh* (Akram Khan and Sue Buckmaster World Tour) and Re-Lighter for *Until The Lions* (Akram Khan Company World Tour).

Miguel James – Sound Design

Aka Endlxssroll A Low-Fi hip-hop music producer and sound designer. Avid allotment keeper, bringing the awareness of healthy eating and affordable living, “grow your own beets”.

Theatre credits include: *Quarter Life Crisis* by Yolanda Mercy.

Screen credits include: Project Diluted Aura (Film -title – TBC).

Music producing credits include: EndlxssRoll Beat tape – Rxxt_ begin, Em-najidnal – Untitled Album (Italian).

Sound engineering credits: Fatal Assassins – Blue Borough Mixtap, Hungry Natsu Cooking, Eahwee – Healxng Sealings, Casio G-shock Sessions.

Sam Thornber - Production Manager
Sam Thornber has been working in the theatre industry for fifteen years. Studying at Edinburgh's Queen Margaret University and cutting his teeth as venue/stage Manager of the Udderbelly in the Edinburgh Fringe he then went on to work as Technical Stage Manager for companies including – National Theatre of Scotland, Stomp, Frantic Assembly, Sadlers Wells, Royal National Theatre, and others. He now spends most of his time working as a production carpenter for touring musicals.

Harriet Bolwell – Producer

Harriet Bolwell is a theatre producer. She is currently Assistant Producer at Paines Plough and Co-Founder & Co-Producer of *COMPLEX*. She was previously Producer at Produced Moon. Her credits include *Pop Music* (Paines Plough & Birmingham Repertory Theatre); *Roundabout Season 2018* (Paines Plough & Theatr Clwyd); *Taking Back Control* (COMPLEX.); *Seawall* (Paines Plough & The Old Vic); *I Wanna Be Yours* (Paines Plough & Tamasha); *Come To Where I'm From* (Paines Plough, Latitude Festival, The Tron, Hull Truck Theatre, Aberdeen Performing Arts & Marketing Gloucester); *Switchboard*, *in:humanity Eden Gate* and *The Hawke Papers* (Produced Moon).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes countless people to make a one-woman show. Jade Lewis, who sat with me when it was just scraps of paper, timelines and questions and helped birth the show – thank you for your intelligence, sensitivity, and grace. To the Extinguished Things team for being a robustly charming crew and working your arses off – thank you for your commitment. Big thanks to Jonathan Hall, Charlie Taylor and Gary McNair for being trusted eyes, and serving up constructive advice when I needed it. To Linda and Dave Bacon, John and Deidre Gossage, Tricia and Owen Hagan, Alex Robinson and Perri Alleyne-Hughes, thanks for letting me into your homes to ask you about your lives (and look at your things). To my parents, for never asking me when I'm going to have a baby, or get a 'proper job' – you've put your weight behind my half-spun hopes for as long as I can remember. I'm truly really grateful for you both. But my greatest thanks go to Sam, who shouldered this show from its very inception, who bore the weight of it and me, and who, like Atlas, keeps everything aloft. You give me something to write about when I write about love. Thank you.

FIRST PERFORMANCE INFO

Extinguished Things was first performed at Anatomy Lecture Theatre, Summerhall at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, on 1 August 2018.

The script went to press during rehearsals, and may differ from the text in performance.

CAST AND CREATIVE LIST

Written and performed by Molly Taylor

DIRECTOR Jade Lewis
DESIGNER Naomi Kuyck-Cohen
SOUND DESIGNER Miguel James
LIGHTING DESIGNER Zak Macro
PRODUCTION MANAGER Sam Thornber
PRODUCER Harriet Bolwell

CHARACTERS

MOLLY – A woman in her mid thirties

SETTING

The play takes place within a day, in two locations: in Molly's parents' house, and in the home of their neighbours, Alton and Evie, in Liverpool.

The world of the play has three registers: Molly in the present, Molly recalling past interactions with her neighbours, and the 'imagined' memories of Alton and Evie's lives together.

For Sue, Rogan, Charlie and Faith.
The best show on the road.

ACT ONE

Scene One: Being at home

In the space – a handful of domestic objects. A so-long-it's-epic net curtain. A fresh carpet. Two standing lamps. A table, with a drawer. Somewhere to make tea, a kettle, a mug, a sugar dispenser filled with tea bags. A bunch of vinyl records in a box.

MOLLY *begins her story in the seating bank, speaks directly to the audience. She's taking them into her confidence, she's looking for an escape route.*

MOLLY I'm back home, living with my parents again…yay! It's been a long time since I've lived here, seventeen years, but here I am…

Don't ask.

I'm in the kitchen. The cutlery drawer is a stainless steel horror show. Like the ladle and the fish slice have never stopped mating and producing offspring. It's the overflow drawer, where cutlery goes to die. In the left-hand corner, concealed under a pallete knife, are a set of keys.

These keys belong to a couple down the street, Al and Evie. They're away, on holiday, they must've been delayed, they haven't returned, no one has heard from them.

I don't know why we've got these keys, because God knows when we last used them. A decade. More. We've obviously forgotten to give them back, or they failed to ask.

Beat.

It wasn't a fight with my mum, it was terse words about the washing machine which I had overfilled because I couldn't see – with my own eyes – that they have a new model with a much smaller drum, and that overfilling it is a crime against engineering. So when it breaks – starts beeping and the door won't open, it isn't an argument it's just a breath-taking example of my lack of respect for this household.

I grab the keys. I can't resist. I just need a bolthole. I can check on the house. Give me mum some space. Just need a bit of fresh air, and then a bit of quiet. And if Alton and Evie are in, if they've returned, then I'll just – make up a reason why I'm knocking round. Sugar. Or something. And maybe they'll invite me in for a cup of tea. And I can hide.

Scene Two: Sevvy Park – Christmas – 2013

MOLLY *recalls.*

MOLLY Five years ago?

Christmas day. Or Boxing Day.

Sefton Park, which locals call Sevvy Park. On a map of Liverpool, it's a little kidney-shaped patch of green.

I'm walking it in, on my own. There's a couple coming towards me on the path. I can see their silhouette and I know their silhouette.

Evie, plumper than she used to be, swathed in layers, or scarves, I can't see where they start and where they end, she is like a willow tree. Al, tall and slimmer, still with a groove in his gait, dreadlocks peeping out from under his hat, bobbing as he walks.

I kind of groan inside, a disproportionate reaction. Sometimes you have those days when you can see the small-talk coming for you, slowly, like a drone. And you mentally pat your pockets for 'chat' – just anything, and you realise… No. I've got nothing.

I must've been tired, or hungover, and desperately enjoying my own company.

Evie clocks me and waves.

I haven't seen these two for a good few years, I don't come home as much as I should, and when I do there isn't a minute.

– Hello! How are you!

When close enough to touch I offer a hug, Evie first, which feels like the natural way to greet her, and then Al, which feels less natural, but we do it anyway.

– You're looking well – *you're* looking well – are you well?
– I am well, how are you? Very well – Merry Christmas!

They seem genuinely pleased to see me and I feel a pinch of guilt.

– How's your mum and dad? Is your dad still fishing? Are you still in London? Did you have your Indian takeaway for Christmas dinner? Did you???

Of course the answers to all these questions are yes, because we're still doing all the things we've always done, and this is good, because it's making them smile and it makes us seem more familiar.

They ask about my sisters; they want 'news'.

– Yeah they're both well.

I mean there genuinely isn't any news, no marriages, no babies, no house purchases.

– What are you up to?

– Just bits and bobs really. Nothing major.

They want to know about all of my life. I string something out.

Then – All power to your elbow! With a fist-pump from Evie

Misplaced enthusiasm has a way of hollowing me out. I don't think I've got much more of this conversation in me. I feel very hungover.

– Well, keep in touch, we love to know what's going on.

– I will, I say – I will. Pause – Are you well?

I think that was the only thing I asked them during the whole conversation. Same question, three or four times.

– Yeah we're very well.

Evie looks up at Al as if to check in that that's the case, and he doesn't say anything but smirks, kisses her on her eyebrow. Nods at me.

– Keep on keeping on Molly.

Which feels like a good, clear sign-off.

That, to my memory, is the last time we spoke.

Scene Three: I Know This Place

MOLLY *on the move.*

MOLLY I walk down the road, towards number nineteen. I haven't lived on this road for a long time, but I know it well. I know the postbox at the end, on the corner, which doesn't actually accept post anymore because it's been decommissioned. I used to love running to that postbox, I used to fly to it, in that way that only children can, air-filled limbs full of lightness, like the wind kicking up. In my mind, that's how I used to run as a child.

I know the controversial purple wheelie bins, which Liverpool City council débuted at the end of the nineties.

– Well think about it! You can't have red bins, and you can't have blue bins. You've got to meet in the middle!

I know the church across the road, which I have never once attended, but I played hide and seek in the grounds.

I know the exact time of the day depending on how the sun hits the tarmac; the entire street a living sundial to me. I know this place like the back of my hand.

Scene Four: The Joy of Sex

MOLLY, *in Alton and Evie's house – strange yet familiar.*

MOLLY I ring the doorbell. No answer.

She handles the keys.

Do I?

I put the key in the lock.

Uninvited, I stand, in their narrow corridor. Looks normal – the same.

'Hello' – just checking.

There is a seven-inch vinyl record framed in their hallway, I remember it. It's been there so long now I know if it ever gets removed, there'll be a paler patch of wall beneath it, like a tan line.

I walk up the corridor, passing the entrance to the living room. A different sofa from last time, one of those L-shaped ones. Charcoal grey. I think it's really new. The carpet is possibly new too, it's quite spongey underfoot, in fact the whole room feels like it's been botoxed.

There's a photo on the mantelpiece, not framed, just propped up. Taken at a football match. Evie's eye caught mid-blink, and Alton's smile, broad, strong – a shoal of teeth.

The book shelf, on one side of the chimney breast, still there, and suddenly – I am thrust – for want of a better word – back to being a teen and discovering *The Joy of Sex*! Sitting on their bookshelf. Plain white cover, oh-so innocent, simple red text on the front. Astonishing to me that it was just sitting on the bookshelf, in the living room – in the middle of the *day*! Not a manual we had in my house. I can remember flicking through the pages, making watertight mental notes of exactly *where* it sat on the bookshelf – the paralysing FEAR that they would know that I had plucked it out and leafed through it. Line drawings of which I had

never seen before – a man licking a woman's armpit, a hairy armpit. This was my awakening. No teen pornhub for my generation, no smart phone, or some shady video doing the rounds at school – it was a simpler time, people. You had to rely on your neighbours, to be out of the room long enough, for you to sneak a peek at a hand-drawn penis.

I'm back there, feasting on this book.

"Bathing together is a natural concomitant of sex and a splendid overture or tailpiece".

What the fuck?

"Taking an ordinary bath together has a charm of its own, although someone has to lean against the plumbing".

How right they were.

I want to find it; the white spine is easy to spot. No sign. Maybe it's in the bedroom where it's meant to be.

Beat.

My parents had prepared my sister's old room, which is luxuriated with a double bed, so they were a bit dismayed when I insist on sleeping in my old room, because the bed hasn't been changed, and there are boxes waiting to go to the charity shop, and it's a bit of a dumping ground.

But the heart wants what it wants, and I want my old room.

I'm sleeping in a single bed again. The simplicity of it.

MOLLY *places a bag, or a piece of clothing down in the space – she is staying. Pops the kettle on. Peaks into the drawer of the table, a bunch of letters live there. She handles them carefully, and begins to place them on the floor.*

There's a desk in the living room. A jigsaw of paper, stuck to the wall – postcards and quotes and handwritten statements. Prophets and philosophers; John Lennon, Allen Ginsberg.

A picture of a marbled face, a frowning Seneca. “We are not ill-supplied of life but we are wasteful of it”.

When I see stuff like this it makes me want to be better at collecting.

There’s a project underway. A pile of faded letters with two distinct sets of handwriting, dated 1942, 1943, 1944. In the folders, every yellowed letter has been transcribed.

Dear Terrence, Somehow I couldn’t get around to writing yesterday eve. Still plugging along as usual. I cannot believe Christmas has come and gone

Dear Rose, I will try to answer all of your questions. The first question you asked if I would be home by July, well I doubt that, in fact I’m sure that I won’t, because it is already July. I believe that a tan is developing, not sure as yet but the red seems to be changing colour.

Evie’s parents, I’m guessing, before her. Letters they had written, sent, kept and stored, and then married together. Left in the loft, for their daughter to find, after their death. Evie, in her retirement, must sit here, sift through them, type them out and fall backwards into her life.

Scene Five: What I've Left

MOLLY *goes to the freshly boiled kettle – adds one tea bag to a cup, then another, pours.*

MOLLY I only brought home what I could carry. I was quite limited. And I could feel Gav's silent judgement, because he's been telling me for years that I need to get a driving licence, or attempt at least a single lesson, and obviously I didn't. So when the time comes for me to depart, I can't even uphold my end of the bargain, which is to leave, cleanly. I go like a teenager, with a sulky backpack; I trust he'll know what to do after I've gone.

She drinks. Her fingers thumb through the letter rack. An order of service in her hands. She wants to piece this together – some of this is invention, some is based on prior knowledge. She is playing.

The night before Lol's funeral Al and Evie light a fire in their living room, in blatant disregard for the conventions of summer. It's a useless, damp June, and cloud lingers low in the sky in a sort of dense stupidity.

Al is looking over what he's written.

– Is it Doreen? His mum? Or Brenda?

Al isn't old, not old as we know it, but in his mid sixties where there were once names there are now tender gaps. Funerals aren't as rare as they used to be.

Two weeks earlier, they'd got the news of their friend. Evie prepping dinner, Alton coming in, he speaks with a different voice.

– It's Lol

Evie cries, briefly but steadily. Al speaks softly but matter-of-factly. It's a quiet stillness, this death, that mutes the room somehow. It manages to feels like something huge for a moment. Death is so strange, so jagged a concept.

Bewildering and painful and the most natural thing in the world. When Alton experiences it that day, it feels like fullness and nothingness in a perfect collision. Hard to get your head round.

Their friend Lol. Or Laurie. Who knew this couple, in the seventies. Before they knew each other. Back then, Alton had a mate Lol, who he'd gone to school with, and Evie had a friend Laurie, who she knew through going to clubs. And one night in the pub, when Alton taps her on the shoulder and says 'Meet Lol', Evie turns around to see her mate Laurie – they are one and the same. And everyone rejoiced. Lol was a link, which at the time felt like fate.

Now he's gone.

All the words they never bothered to attribute to him suddenly pop like bubbles.

– Lovely, decent, down-to-earth, kind, so kind, remember that time…

– Talented, decent, reliable.

– Proper, y'know, he was a *proper* person.

People always grow in stature in death.

Suddenly aware of the un-lived in space around her.

In Al and Evie's place there's a digital radio in every room. A turntable from a much cooler era. A CD player with proper speakers. A set of symbols on the top of the piano, and an electric keyboard in the spare room. Which looks like a music room, a mic on a stand.

But this place is so quiet.

No cats. Litter tray – gone. Feeding bowls, by the back door that opens out into the garden. Gone.

A discovery.

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