

Acting Edition

'Til Death

by Alexis Scheer

Music & Lyrics by Dan Ryan

This sample is an excerpt of a
Concord Theatricals title.

Samples of Concord Theatricals titles
are for perusal and cannot be used for
performance or downloaded, printed,
and distributed in any way.

This sample may not reflect the version
of the play currently in print.

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

Copyright © 2025 by Alexis Scheer
All Rights Reserved

'*TIL DEATH* is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all member countries of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, the Universal Copyright Convention, and/or the World Trade Organization conforming to the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television, online/digital production, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-71182-4

www.concordtheatricals.com

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

info@concordtheatricals.com

1-866-979-0447

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

licensing@concordtheatricals.co.uk

020-7054-7298

Each title is subject to availability from Concord Theatricals Corp., depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that '*TIL DEATH* may not be licensed by Concord Theatricals Corp. in your territory. Professional and amateur producers should contact the nearest Concord Theatricals Corp. office or licensing partner to verify availability.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that '*TIL DEATH* is subject to a licensing fee. The purchase, renting, lending or use of this book does not constitute a license to perform this title(s), which license must be obtained from Concord Theatricals Corp. prior to any performance. Performance of this title(s) without a license is a violation of federal law and may subject the producer and/or presenter of such performances to civil penalties. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to the appropriate agent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title(s) is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Professional/Stock licensing fees are quoted upon application to Concord Theatricals Corp.

This work is published by Samuel French, an imprint of Concord Theatricals Corp.

No one shall make any changes in this title(s) for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, scanned, uploaded, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, digital, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. No one shall share this title(s), or any part of this title(s), through any social media or file hosting websites.

For all inquiries regarding motion picture, television, online/digital and other media rights, please contact Concord Theatricals Corp.

MUSIC AND THIRD-PARTY MATERIALS USE NOTE

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music and/or other copyrighted third-party materials (e.g. artworks, logos) in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music and materials that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for clearances of all third-party copyrighted materials, including without limitation music, and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, Concord Theatricals Corp., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of such copyrighted third-party materials by licensees. For music, please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

If you have obtained performance rights to this title, please refer to your licensing agreement for important billing and credit requirements.

'*TIL DEATH* premiered under the title *BREAKING THE STORY* and was originally commissioned and produced by Second Stage Theater (Carole Rothman, President and Artistic Director; Lisa Lawer Post, Executive Director) in New York City on June 4, 2024. The production was directed by Jo Bonney, with scenic design by Myung Hee Cho, costume design by Emilio Sosa, lighting design by Jeff Croiter, sound design by Darron L. West, projection design by Elaine J. McCarthy, hair & makeup design by J. Jared Janas, choreography by Kelly Devine, vocal coaching by Liz Hayes, original music by Dan Ryan, and casting by The Telsey Office (Karyn Casl, CSA; Destiny Lilly, CSA). The Production Stage Manager was Alfredo Macias and the Assistant Stage Manager was Genevieve F. Kersh. The cast was as follows:

MARINA Maggie Siff
BEAR Louis Ozawa
SONIA Geneva Carr
CRUZ Gabrielle Policano
GUMMY Julie Halston
NIKKI Tala Ashe
FED. Matthew Saldívar
UNDERSTUDIES Laura Jordan, Jorge Luna,
 Angelica Toledo, & Caris Vujcec

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deepest gratitude to Carole Rothman and the very many people at Second Stage who helped develop the play there, including Jo Bonney, Maggie Siff, Sarah Lunnie, and the *Breaking the Story* team at the Tony Kiser. Additional thanks to Di Glazer; Young Playwrights Ukraine; Juliette Ojeda; the artists at the picnic tables of Interlochen and the back theatre at Boston Playwrights Theatre; and The Pickle Council: Lila Rose Kaplan, Kirsten Greenidge, Kira Rockwell, David Valdes, and Walt McGough who empowered me to keep working on the play (and restore its original title) after the first production, and reminded me that plays are never finished, they simply open.

CHARACTERS

MARINA – F. White. 40s/ 50s. A foreign correspondent for an American news channel. Fiercely competent on the field, but unable to keep a firm grip at home. Elegant, Sharp, and Absolutely Fucking Losing It.

BEAR – M. 40s/50s. A cameraman for an American news channel. Marina's fiancé. Rugged, Charming, and True to His Vows.

SONIA – F. 40s/50s. Marina's Maid of Honor. A socialite and philanthropist. Cold, Meticulous, and Ready For Battle.

CRUZ – F. Latina. 20s. Marina and Fed's daughter. A singer/songwriter and almost college senior. Gifted, Resilient, and Writing a Song.

GUMMY – F. White. 60s/70s. Marina's mother. A retiree. Funny, Blunt, and Letting Go.

Also appears as a **REFUGEE** – Disturbed, Tender, and Looking for Her Daughter.

NIKKI – F. 30s. A freelance journalist and Marina's colleague. Cunning, Ambitious, and Here For The Inside Scoop.

Also appears as the **AID WORKER**.

FED – M. Latino. Late 40s/Early 50s. Marina's ex-husband. An anchor for an American news channel. Suave, Romantic, and Here To Win Her Back.

Also appears as the **MAN**.

*Non-speaking roles that appear in the intrusions of war, including **MAN** and **AID WORKER** can be played by additional ensemble members. The role of **REFUGEE** should always be doubled by the actor playing **GUMMY**.

SETTING

A lovely place to throw a garden wedding in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Also, a War Zone.

TIME

Right now. Or in the near future. Or maybe it already happened.

NOTES ON PRODUCTION

A forward slash [/] indicates the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue.

Text in between double less than/greater than signs [<< >>] indicates a heightened state of being, and a slippery grip on reality. These are intrusions of war on Marina's psyche. Maybe they're realized through video projections. Maybe there's an ensemble. Or maybe it's just sound and lights. Think of it as a texture or filter that is being added to distort the world of the Wellesley garden.

When French was spoken in the play we did *not* use supertitles. When Ukrainian and Russian were spoken we *did* use supertitles.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

In the fall of 2019, I picked up the book that inspired me to write this play, *In Extremis: The Life of War Correspondent Marie Colvin* by Lindsey Hilsum. At the time, my boyfriend Dan (now husband) was in the middle of chemotherapy treatment for Stage IV small bowel cancer, and we were speaking the ill-fitting language of war as he waged this great *fight*, this great *battle* in private. It seems obvious to me now, all these years later, that I picked up that biography and dozens after it because I was looking for the courage to stare at this terrible thing head on and not lose hope. And who better to draw strength and inspiration from than those who have dedicated their lives to bearing witness? I wrote the play and Dan wrote music for it during the years he cautiously journeyed towards survivorship, through a pandemic and multiple wars breaking out – we spent our honeymoon in a hotel in Montreal watching Russia invade Ukraine – the balance of life and death always feeling so immediate. Writing this note feels scary and exposing, like the first official public documentation of the scars we both carry; Dan's, of course, more significant and literal. But it feels necessary to mention because that experience is what lies underneath the play. To be clear, this is not a play about cancer. But it is about the kind of psychic reckoning I hope we're all afforded with our loved ones as we face our own mortality. It's both a requiem and my own *The Wizard of Oz* in a way. A call home. To rest. To peace.

"Hasta la muerte, todo es vida."

– Cervantes

*For my husband, Dan.
Dayenu.*

(In the dark, the sounds of war are muted and distorted by post-explosion ringing.)

*(A faint light picks up **MARINA**, who wears a helmet and bulletproof press vest. She's disoriented, trying to shut the ringing out.)*

MARINA. This is a nightmare. **THIS IS A FUCKING NIGHTMARE.**

<<

(An explosion of breaking news and angry girl rock. **MARINA** disappears from view as **CRUZ**, her daughter, bursts out with a microphone and sings her viral song "Yesterday's Revolution." It feels like a music video.)*

CRUZ.

TWO, THREE, FOUR!
CHOOSE SOMEONE ELSE TO BLAME
HATE DROWNS ME, SET IT ALL AFLAME
THIS TOWN, MY TOWN! IT ALL BURNT DOWN
IN YESTERDAY'S REVOLUTION

(War rages around her.)

THE STORY THAT YOU NEVER LEARNED
WHEN I WAS YOUNG EMBERS STILL BURN
THIS HEART, MY HEART, IT RIPPED APART
IN YESTERDAY'S REVOLUTION

* A license to produce *'Til Death* does not include a license to publicly display any third-party or copyrighted images or text. Licensees must acquire rights for any copyrighted media or create their own.

(The 24-hour news cycle appears like a hurricane.)

CRUZ.

THERE'S NO HAPPY ENDING,
SO LET'S JUST STOP PRETENDING
I WANNA FEEL THE FLAME, RECLAIM, PROCLAIM
SET FIRE TO MY NAME, AND WATCH IT BURN

*(On the word "burn" a breaking news headline appears: **RUSSIAN AIRSTRIKE HITS HOSPITAL**)*

WATCH IT BURN
WATCH IT BURN

(Screamed.)

FUCK!

(War continues to rage.)

I HEAR ALL YOUR EMPTY WORDS
THEIR VACANT WEIGHT, THE BURDEN HEARD
THIS MIND, MY MIND! WAS TRAPPED, CONFINED
IN YESTERDAY'S REVOLUTION

*(Breaking news headline: **RUSSIA CLAIMS HOSPITAL WAS LEGITIMATE TARGET.**)*

BRICKS, STONES THROWN, WALLS PUNCHED OUT
THIS ENDLESS SHIT, ALL AROUND
THIS HOUSE, MY HOUSE! WAS HOLLOWED OUT
IN YESTERDAY'S REVOLUTION

THERE'S NO HAPPY ENDING,
SO LET'S JUST STOP PRETENDING
I WANNA FEEL THE FLAME, RECLAIM, PROCLAIM
SET FIRE TO MY NAME, AND WATCH IT BURN

*(On the word "burn" a breaking news headline appears: **AMERICAN JOURNALIST MARINA REYES MISSING, PRESUMED DEAD.**)*

WATCH IT BURN
 WATCH IT BURN
 WATCH IT BURN
 WATCH IT BURN
 WATCH IT BURN

(CRUZ breathes heavily as if she has just won a physical fight.)

(The song ends, thrusting us into darkness.)

>>

(And then suddenly...)

(MARINA appears in a gorgeously green garden in the backyard of a home in Wellesley, Massachusetts.)

(BEAR joins her with a cup of coffee, smoking a cigarette.)

MARINA. Heaven, right?

BEAR. *(He loves it.)* I hate it.

MARINA. Don't ask how much it cost.

BEAR. I can't believe you bought a house.

MARINA. *(Giddy.)* Neither can I. Listen.

BEAR. What?

MARINA. It's so quiet I can hear all my intrusive thoughts!

BEAR. That's what I'm saying! I'm just so fucking sad!
 Here! I'm sad here!

MARINA. Do you wanna go to a hotel? You could be sad at the Marriott?

BEAR. I'd feel less ridiculous.

MARINA. But you wouldn't smell as good.

BEAR. I used the two hundred dollar cream on your dresser. / I googled it.

MARINA. You goo- you asshole! Well, you're glowing.

BEAR. I gotta be honest, this is not what I was expecting.

MARINA. You thought I lived in some abandoned apartment. Mail piled up. Old takeout in the fridge.

BEAR. That's me you're describing. But no, really, how much was this place? Five? Six mil?

MARINA. I said don't ask.

BEAR. I can -

MARINA. Don't google it!

BEAR. I can't believe you bought a house here. When are you ever in Massachusetts?

MARINA. Don't say Massachusetts like that.

BEAR. (*Even more annoying.*) Massachusetts.

MARINA. And it's not just Massachusetts. It's Wellesley. Or as my mom would say, *Swellesley*. She used to bring me here to go Trick or Treating. I always told her I'd live here one day.

And now look - this year it's gonna be *me* with the carved pumpkins. Full-sized candy bars. Tombstones on the lawn. Ghosts dangling from the trees, blowing in the wind.

(**BEAR** pulls out his phone.)

BEAR. I'm googling it.

MARINA. No! Stop! Just enjoy it!

BEAR. (*Whiny.*) It's all too much. The gold leaf invitations, the black car, the roses, this house. And then tomorrow you're gonna make me wear a suit so some rich people

can give you an award, and then I'm gonna have to schmooze and I hate schmoozing.

MARINA. You're performing disgust, but deep down I think you're into all this. You just don't wanna lose your street cred.

BEAR. No really, these award things freak me out. They like reinforce this hierarchy of suffering and make it feel like we're all competing to break and capture whatever terrible thing is at the top. It's some real thirty-pieces-of-silver shit.

MARINA. Is that why you keep your Emmy in a drawer?

BEAR. Yeah. I hate that thing.

MARINA. But you deserved it. What you went through to get that footage home.

BEAR. (*Facetious.*) That's exactly what I was thinking when I was kidnapped, "Now at least I might win an Emmy!"

MARINA. You've never talked about Libya.

BEAR. It's history.

MARINA. Only if it's recorded.

BEAR. Not much to put on record.

MARINA. All the other guys did interviews.

BEAR. I don't like the spotlight.

MARINA. They turned that one guy's book into a movie.

BEAR. It tanked.

MARINA. You could have written a book, a book they turned into a movie.

BEAR. (*Sharper than intended.*) I was handcuffed to a chair for sixteen days! Nobody wants to see that!

MARINA. (*Disarming him.*) I guess bondage is off the table for us then.

BEAR. (*Relaxing again.*) I didn't say that.

MARINA. Well, I'm looking forward to this award thing for once. It'll probably be my last.

BEAR. What do you mean?

MARINA. I'm retiring. Wow that's weird to say out loud. I'm retiring. (*To the garden.*) I'M RETIRING!

BEAR. You're kidding.

MARINA. I'm announcing it tomorrow. It's part of my acceptance speech.

BEAR. Holy shit.

MARINA. Distinguished Achievement. It's like they wanna give me a Lifetime Achievement Award in case I die out there next time, but they don't want to be obvious about it.

BEAR. Glad to know that's the consolation prize for having a missile land on your head.

MARINA. But you were there too. (*Overdramatic.*) Why am I alone in the misfortune of being recognized?

BEAR. You're more interesting than me.

MARINA. It's 'cause I'm a woman and they think I'm fragile.

BEAR. No one thinks you're fragile.

MARINA. Then damaged. But the sexy kind of damaged that makes me still appealing.

BEAR. Admit you love the attention.

MARINA. (*A deadly smile.*) I'm a weapon of mass contradiction.

BEAR. Retirement. Fuck.

MARINA. Can you believe it?

BEAR. Twenty years on the front line.

MARINA. And I've got the scars to prove it.

BEAR. What are you gonna do next?

MARINA. You're looking at it. I'll soak in the tub for the next century. Get a dog. Maybe write a book.

BEAR. A book they'll turn into a movie?

MARINA. And I'll be with Cruz for once. I mean honestly, I just wanted to get her out of the dorms. Make sure she's okay. *(At a loss.)* I don't know, all she does is sleep.

BEAR. And write. I heard her working on a song last night.

MARINA. She's been locked in her room ever since I got back.

BEAR. She just needs time.

(MARINA can't shake a bad feeling.)

Hey, it's not your fault.

(BEAR brings her in for a hug or kiss. He melts away her bad feeling.)

MARINA. It's weird having you here. All clean and calm in my pretty green garden.

BEAR. Should I go?

MARINA. No.

BEAR. Good.

MARINA. Do you ever think what your next chapter looks like?

BEAR. *(A lie.)* No.

MARINA. *(Coy.)* Bear, why are you here?

BEAR. You invited me.

MARINA. And?

BEAR. And – and I wanted to see if this was real. If this could be more than the off-on work spouse thing we’ve been doing for years.

MARINA. And? What’s the verdict? Is it real?

BEAR. If you want it to be.

MARINA. *(Smiles.)* I gotta warn you. I’m a War Zone Ten. But a Real World Three. Four on a good day.

BEAR. I’ve seen you shit in a bucket, Marina.

MARINA. It gets worse.

BEAR. I already know you talk in your sleep.

MARINA. I do?

BEAR. Sometimes. When you’re having a nightmare.

MARINA. What do I say?

BEAR. You’re calling out for Yasmin.

MARINA. The Sapphire.

BEAR. The hotel bombing, I know. Legendary coverage.

MARINA. What else do I say?

BEAR. *(Matter of fact.)* “I’m bleeding. I’m bleeding.”

MARINA. I’m bleeding?

BEAR. The hospital strike?

(MARINA doesn’t remember bleeding after the hospital attack, but she doesn’t dwell on it.)

MARINA. Well, it bleeds it leads I guess. Don’t worry, Sonia – my friend Sonia, she’ll be here soon – she’ll drag me to some spa – that usually helps the nightmares. You know, realign my chakras, touch grass, smell the flowers. Oh! You should know this about me: I hate roses.

BEAR. No roses.

MARINA. They remind me of my ex. Everything warranted roses. A casual lunch. Roses. A minor disagreement. Roses. Picture our wedding.

BEAR. Roses.

MARINA. It was beyond.

BEAR. So you don't like weddings.

MARINA. Oh no, the wedding was awesome. It was the marriage that sucked.

BEAR. Would you get married again?

MARINA. Like in general, or to you?

BEAR. In general.

MARINA. No. Not in general. But I could marry you, I think.

BEAR. *(Pulling her in close.)* Oh, really?

MARINA. I do have a very strict no-fucking-off-the-field rule. *(She kisses him.)* And we've broken that. *(Kisses him.)* A few times. *(Kisses him.)* So now we have to get married. I don't want all the other correspondents thinking I'm so easily won.

BEAR. Of course.

MARINA. Let's get married.

BEAR. Everyone's right, you are crazy.

MARINA. Probably. So what?

BEAR. You're funny.

MARINA. You want me, come and have me.

BEAR. Hold on, hold on. I might be a War Zone Ten. But I'm a Real World Five.

MARINA. You're a War Zone Eight.

BEAR. Heeeey!

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

www.concordtheatricals.com

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and anything theater-related, follow us on our social media channels.

@ConcordShows and **@ConcordUKShows** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

concord
theatricals