



Killer Joe

Tracy Letts

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Full Length, Black Comedy

Characters: 3 male, 2 female

Interior Set

This exciting first play by the author of *August: Osage County* premiered at Chicago's Steppenwolf before going on to acclaimed productions in London and New York. Hired by the dissolute Smith family to murder the matriarch for insurance money, "Killer Joe" takes the daughter to bed as a retainer against his final payoff which sets in motion a bloody aftermath as the "hit man" meets his match.

"Set in Dallas, *Killer Joe* revels in its white trash stereotypes, and gives you permission to do the same; it's pulp fiction which has it both ways, deriving humor from dirty realism. It's slick, it's well constructed, it knows exactly where it's going."-*New York Daily News*

Killer Joe Details

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Author : Tracy Letts

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From Reader Review Killer Joe for online ebook

Bettie? says

Southern Gothic

Jon Hewelt says

Killer Joe is probably my favorite Tracy Letts play. Bug's a close second, but Killer Joe is definitely tops.

Chris is in dire financial straits, and the only option seems to be killing his mother for the insurance money. He, his father, and his father's step-mother, hire Killer Joe: a crooked detective who murders on the side. The only problem is that Killer Joe requires payment up front, no exception, and the Smiths don't have it. But perhaps he'll make an exception for Chris's sister, who immediately catches his eye . . .

Such a menacing play, full of anger and malevolence and violence. The characters are coarse, and broad "white trash" stereotypes are freely utilized. But utilized smartly: in reveling in these stereotypes, Letts gets to the heart of his characters' dark souls, and finds complexity where one might only assume shallowness.

I had the good fortune of seeing a portion of this play performed in a small apartment kitchen: a particular scene with a shocking, garish, violent act perpetrated. It was shocking, perversely thrilling, even. Watching that scene drove home how loaded Letts's earlier works are. Intense, angry plays with big ideas, and an eye for what audiences want to see.

I like August: Osage County just fine, but when it comes to Tracy Letts, I gotta go with his earlier work, especially Killer Joe. Check it out: you won't regret it.

Laura says

From IMDB;

When a debt puts a young man's life in danger, he turns to putting a hit out on his evil mother in order to collect the insurance.

With Matthew McConaughey, Emile Hirsch, Juno Temple.

Sarah says

Letts uses the phrase 'detritus of the poor' to describe the various types of junk that litter this play's single set and that phrase is very telling of his attitude towards his subjects. There is not a missed joke about rednecks

and there are characters that amount to no more than collections of white trash stereotypes. However, when he chooses to elevate characters it's done beautifully and adds just enough poignancy to what is otherwise a grotesque southern gothic that revels so delightfully in its own tastelessness.

K. says

4.5 stars, really. The best plays are the ones about absolutely dysfunctional people and how they attempt to relate to one another. Letts has a stellar way of putting it all together.

Chris Smith comes up with a fool-proof plan to have his mother killed for her insurance money, recruiting Killer Joe, a detective and occasional hitman, to do so. He ropes his father Ansel into agreeing to it, while his younger sister Dottie is the supposed beneficiary of the policy. They attempt to keep her ignorant of the scheme. Accordingly, things refuse to go to plan.

"DOTTIE: My momma tried to kill me when I was real little. She put a pillow over my face and tried to stop me from breathing, 'cause she cared more about herself than her little baby, and she didn't love me like a mother loves a little baby. And she thought she'd done it, and she was happy, 'cause then she didn't have to worry about me eating her food, and sleeping in her bed, and growing up to be the part of her that was cut out and grown into a better thing than she had been, had ever been. 'Cause that would mean the best part of her was me. But she hadn't done it, she didn't give me back to Him, she only made me sick, *made me not be for a while; but then I was and she was sad that I was, and that I always would be.*"

That was the first conversation Dottie and Joe have. It just knocked me around a bit; that *phrasing*. I had to put this away for a hot minute and come back hours later. But when I did come back, Dottie was still amazing (and played by Sarah Paulson in the 1998 run, which Letts also seemed to be very excited by, if the (!) after her name is any indication) and then this happened:

JOE: (*He hands one of the photographs to Ansel.*)

Is that your dick?

So you know, exceptional.

Victoria Claringbold says

Tracy Letts has a way with dialogue and family dysfunction. This play is a black comedy and as exciting and unpredictable as his other works. I have another Letts play I must read now. There are good monologues for males ages 38, 22 (Texas accent).

Matt Chan says

Okay, this is a page-turner of a play but dang, I probably never want to see it. It's basically awful people being awful at each other, with gruesome consequences. I can see it being very effective in the theater, and

the book itself is pretty well written, but not necessarily a way I want to spend my time.

Steve says

Brutal, biting portrayal of ugly, despicable people. This play will probably never be done in the Capital Region due to it's sexuality and violence. Please prove me wrong!

Bruno Baba says

Dramatic

It was very interesting. The only thing I didn't enjoy was the ending. The characters were unique and not like people I know from everyday life

Grant Conversano says

Great Play.

Mike LaRosa says

Is it cheating to read a couple short screenplays to finish my reading goal for the year? Anyway, if we're talking quality regardless of quantity, this play is nuts and made me really look forward to rewatching the film. These characters are so despicable and awful that the words and stage directions themselves hold up on their own. It just works, in an uncomfortably dark and abhorrent way.

jeremy says

the newest stageplay from pulitzer prize-winning playwright tracy letts, *killer joe* revisits family drama and dysfunction - setting it this time in a trailer park outside of dallas. letts, as with *august: osage country*, exhibits an impressive command of dialogue and vernacular. noirish in theme, violent in the end, yet tinged with a delighting dark humor, the plot of *killer joe*, sadly, does not seem all that far-fetched. compelling on the page, it's likely captivating on the stage. letts is a fine dramatist; surely one of the more important figures currently at work in the american theatre today.

your casserole smells nice. i think you got a good scald on it. i wish i had a funny story about blind dates or casseroles, but i don't. maybe one will come to me later. maybe not.

i'm generally dispassionate towards film adaptations, but matthew mcconaughey looks spectacularly sadistic!

Jordan says

Tracy Letts is talented AF and that is a fact. She developed the most solid characters through superb dialogue and then puts them into crazy circumstances. She clearly has an affinity for white trash and she can speak to them like no other. I am just gaga over this play and the WTF ending.

Dark. Funny. Real.

Juan Camilo Velandia Quijano says

Letts never disappoints. This play is strong, surprising, bold and exciting. The reading is stressful, you always want to know what's going to happen in this crazy family, and surprises come one after the other. The author's talent in creating a story is clear once again.

Mary Margaret says

This play was fucked. Up.
