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Cats' Play

The correspondence between two elderly sisters serves as a framework for this play which is based on a bestseller story and has achieved international fame on the stages of Europe. The older one, Giza - an invalid bound to the push-chair- lives in West-Germany in her rich son's home. This refined and wise old lady has accepted old age with resignation and is waiting for death in a state of intellectual and emotional "hibernation". The heroine of the drama is Erzsi, the 65 year old widow of Béla Orbán. Giza whose ardent wish is to have her sister with her in Germany follows from her wheel-chair /placed in one corner of the stage/ her sister's doings with anxious disapproval. Her anxiety is justified: Erzsi is unwilling to yield to old age. What she thirsts after is full, undiluted life, being still able to enjoy euphoric joys and extreme desperations which public opinion considers to be the privilege of the youth. She reacts violently and without restraint to everything, establishing intimate, passionate relations with persons and things alike. Hence the title of the novel : with her nextdoor neighbour, a frightened, frustrated, non-descript woman nicknamed Mousey, gambolling and miawing, the "play at cats".

The story begins with Erzsi having just made the acquaintance and becoming the friend of an other woman, Paula.

To this friendship she brings the unlimited confidence and rapturous devotion of a schoolgirl. Paula, like Erzsi, is a woman of advanced years, but she is dapper where Erzsi is sloppy and cunning where Erzsi is naive. Through artful machinations she makes Erzsi gradually disclose the little tricks with which the latter keeps and holds fast her one and only love: ex-opera singer Victor Csermlényi. Erzsi fell in love when she was a little girl and remained faithful to him through her marriage to Béla Orbán. True: the former passionate love has gone forever but Thursday evenings, when the greedy old glutton condescends to eating gargantuan dinners in her home, are red-letter days in Erzsi's life. In her artlessness Erzsi performs the introduction herself and Paula starts her work at once: already the next Thursday Victor excuses himself... Erzsi provokes scandal after scandal but in vain. She rushes into Paula's room to catch the traitors in flagranti. Then Victor's mother, the mummified, but still majestic ex-Wagner singer, a nonagerian, throws her out from Victor's flat. Just like energetic mothers of flighty students throw out teenage girls importunating their sons. On such occasions teen-age girls take poison, because they are young and believe that life- and suffering last for ever. Well, 65 year old Mrs. Béla Orbán feels the same. Her attempt at suicide fails, however, as his son-in-law, a physician, substitutes the required sleeping pills with some harmless drug. Next morning Erzsi wakes with utter amazement from her "eternal" sleep and finds Giza by her bedside: for weeks the elder sister has received alarming reports from Mousey and from Ilus, Mrs. Orbán's ambitious and rigid, but correct daughter. Giza has made up her mind: she is willing to return to Hungary and move with her sister to the country. In the little village where they grew up they will lead the quiet, secluded life of old women. It is at this juncture that Erzsi and her eager, devoted little slave Mousey present their "Cats' Play". Giza's boisterous laughter turns into abject mumbling: "Oh dear, I have wetted my pants!" No, Cats' Play does not suit Giza, neither does quiet country life and complete capitulation suit Erzsi.....