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*Dramatic Publishing*

# DEADLY WEAPONS

A Play  
by  
LAURIE BROOKS



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(DEADLY WEAPONS)

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for my sister  
Emelie FitzGibbon,  
with love and gratitude

\* \* \* \*

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*Deadly Weapons* is listed in ASSITEJ/USA Outstanding Plays for Young Audiences, Vol. VI, 1999.

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## Introduction

Suddenly, there were three characters in the room. Demanding, secretive, vulnerable, they compelled our attention, taking us on a dark adventure into uncomfortable places. We followed.

This was the extraordinary and seminal moment in the devising room that saw the genesis of *Deadly Weapons*. Laurie Brooks had come to Ireland to work with Graffiti Theatre Company on a new script. *Deadly Weapons* was the result, an ideal mix of educationally provocative ideas embedded in a fast-paced thriller aimed at fourteen- to sixteen-year-olds. The play became our 1998 fall tour, a successful and challenging experience for both students and teachers who found themselves deeply invested in the recognisable young characters in the play.

Serena is new to the neighbourhood, desperate to belong to the seemingly more glamorous world of Moss and Jessie. Challenged by them, she accepts a dare to do something deadly dangerous. However, a secret that Serena keeps will turn the dare into a nightmare and force these three young adults to confront the nature of their relationships and their responsibilities to themselves and each other. The “deadly weapons” of Laurie Brooks’ play are more than the literal ones on the charge sheet, they are sharply embedded in family, society, peer relations—in ourselves.

*Deadly Weapons* is a play about vulnerability, about hurt and about challenges. It speaks to young adults and those who work with and for them. Its voices are real voices. As one thirteen-year-old audience member said to me, “I know these people.” It is this recognition which makes the play compelling. Everyone in the audience empathizes with at

least one of the characters and identifies with the landslide from a deceptively simple dare to “be one of us,” into a relentless spiral of damaging consequences.

With simple staging requirements and a cast of four, *Deadly Weapons* is immensely flexible for touring production. It is, moreover, an exciting play to direct in its demand to achieve both the relentless forward momentum of the plot and the subtle nuances required of the actors.

*Deadly Weapons* is theatre which treats a young adult audience with respect and recognition; portraying the toughness and absolutism of both their world and their mind-sets while respecting their ability to identify and analyze the anti-models presented. It is an edgy play, one at the current boundaries of the genre. But it is a play that enables us to hear the energized and engaged response of the young audience and feel their frisson of recognition.

As the audience of *Deadly Weapons*, we are challenged by competing sympathies underlying a tense and driven plot. As directors, actors and explorers we are challenged to investigate and inhabit the vital reality of this charged and dangerous world.

Emelie FitzGibbon, Artistic Director,  
Graffiti Theatre Company,  
Cork, Ireland

*Deadly Weapons* was commissioned, devised with and premiered by Graffiti Theatre Company, Cork, Ireland, September 21, 1998.

Mossie . . . . . DAVID KELLY  
Jess . . . . . NORA MULLIN  
Sinead . . . . . ANNA PLATT  
Conroy . . . . . JOHN LOVETT

Director . . . . . EMELIE FITZGIBBON  
Fight Director . . . . . CHARLIE RUXTON  
Set Design . . . . . KURT BIPPERT  
Production Manager . . . . . NIGEL VUKASINOVIC  
Sound Production . . . . . ROGER GREGG  
Education Officer . . . . . SEONA NI BHRIAIN  
Devising Company . . . . . DAVID KELLY, KURT BIPPERT,  
DIANE O'KEEFFE, EVEANNA O'MEARA,  
SEONA NI BHRIAIN, BRYAN HARTEN

*Deadly Weapons* was presented in a rehearsed reading at New York University Program in Educational Theatre's New Plays for Young Audiences at the Provincetown Playhouse, New York City, June 23, 24 and 25, 2000.

Moss . . . . . SHANNON GANNON, DENNIS WALTER  
Jessie . . . . . JANE WILSON  
Serena . . . . . JENNIFER SMOLOS  
Conroy . . . . . WILL BARTLETT  
Stage Directions . . . . . DENNIS WALTER, SHANNON GANNON

Director . . . . . GRAHAM WHITEHEAD  
Stage Manager . . . . . MICHELLE BERTI  
Designer . . . . . JASON LIVINGSTON  
Producer . . . . . MELISSA SWICK  
Program Director . . . . . LOWELL SWORTZELL



*Deadly Weapons* was presented at a Dark Night Staged Reading at Dallas Children's Theater with the support of Presbyterian Health Care, November 2000.

Moss ..... DERIK WEBB  
Jessie ..... STEPHANIE YBARRA  
Serena ..... KATE BLACKSTONE  
Old Man Leisner ..... PAT KELLEY  
Stage Directions ..... KELLY ABBOTT

Director ..... GRAHAM WHITEHEAD

The American premiere of *Deadly Weapons* was the inaugural play in Dallas Children's Theater's Young Adult Series at the Crescent Theater, March 1, 2002.

Moss ..... DERIK WEBB  
Jessie ..... STEPHANIE YBARRA  
Serena ..... KATE BLACKSTONE  
Old Man Leisner ..... TERRY VANDIVORT

Director ..... GRAHAM WHITEHEAD  
Set Design ..... MARY THERESE D'AVIGNON  
Lighting Design ..... LINDA BLASE  
Sound Design ..... MARCO E. SALINAS  
Costume Design ..... DIANE SIMONS  
Prop Design ..... HEATHER WILLINGHAM  
Executive Artistic Director ..... ROBYN FLATT  
Associate Artistic Director ..... ARTIE OLAISEN

# DEADLY WEAPONS

A Play in One Act  
For 2 Men and 2 Women

## CHARACTERS

JESSIE..... female, 15 years old

MOSS ..... male, 15 years old

SERENA..... female, 15 years old

OLD MAN LEISNER ..... in his 40s

SETTING: Serena's house and Leisner's loft.

TIME: The present.

## DEADLY WEAPONS

*(In the blackout, loud metal sound effects or heavy metal music. Enter JESSIE, MOSS and SERENA, shining flashlights over the audience. Sound effects climax and fade but remain under the monologues. SERENA and JESSIE focus their flashlights on MOSS as he speaks.)*

MOSS. It's no big deal. I expect Brian to beat the shit out of me. It's not so bad. He goes on at me for a while then it's over. He says get out of my sight. You make me sick. You're the one who's sick, I think, but I don't say nothin'. Brian's cool. Nobody gets in his way. Sometimes he lets me run errands for him, 'cause I'm his brother. Not the big stuff, 'cause I screw up sometimes, but Brian says I'll learn, if he doesn't kill me first. I hang out with Jessie mostly. Jessie and me are just waiting. Waiting for our chance to do somethin'. Somethin' big. Then Brian'll treat us different. He'll show us respect. And if Brian respects us, everyone will.

*(Sound effects surge and fade. MOSS and SERENA turn their flashlights on JESSIE.)*

JESSIE. Every day I got to deal with her. Her eyes all glazed over and empty, like there's nothing there. This morning, one piece of hair was stickin' up right out of

the top of her head like she'd been sleepin' on it too long and it grew that way. She looked funny as hell, but somehow I couldn't bring myself to laugh. She was too pathetic. Her with her Bible study group. She's always tryin' to get me to go to church with her! She can't make me go. Not anymore. She says I'll go to hell, but I don't care. She whines and moans and talks about the devil. She never gives up. Soon I'll be out of there and I won't have to deal with her stupid rules and the pathetic way she looks at me. She doesn't have a clue who I really am. Nobody does. Not yet.

*(Sound effects surge and fade. MOSS and JESSIE turn their flashlights on SERENA.)*

SERENA. I think a lot about what it would be like to be in the movies. You could be a different person, someone brave and beautiful and extraordinary. And with each movie you'd have the chance to be someone new. That's what I'd like, to be someone new. I never told anybody that. They'd probably just laugh. I know Jessie would. She laughs at everything. But she's cool. And she's tough. Not like me. Mom says that things change. Every day's another chance and that hard times make us stronger. I think she's right about the hard times part. But when I told her that, you know what she did? She started cryin'. You'd think she would have been happy to hear how she was right about somethin'.

*(Sound effects surge. All three characters swing their flashlights over the audience. Sound effects fade.)*

*(Lights shift. SERENA's house. MOSS sprawls. SERENA looks out the window. JESSIE does SERENA's hair.)*

JESSIE. Pull it off your face like this, Serena. See? It shows off your eyes.

SERENA. You think so? I usually wear it down.

JESSIE. This is much better. It doesn't hide your face. You like it, Moss?

MOSS. It's awright.

JESSIE. What do you know. It looks great. You should wear it like that all the time.

SERENA. Thanks, Jessie. I mean for showin' me around and all.

JESSIE. Hey, I know what it's like to be new. When my dad was around he used to drag us all over the place. We moved four times one year. You just stick with me and Moss. We'll take care of you.

MOSS. Yeah, we'll be like your bodyguards.

JESSIE. I wish there was somethin' to do. This day is so boring. My whole life is utterly, completely boring.

MOSS. Shut up. You're makin' it worse. Whinin' about it.

JESSIE. I can complain if I feel like it.

MOSS. Then go somewhere else so I don't have to hear it.

JESSIE *(yelling in his face)*. Bored. I'm bored. I'm so bored I could die.

MOSS. Get off me.

SERENA. Let's go somewhere.

JESSIE. Where?

SERENA. I dunno. Anywhere but here. There's nothin' to do here.

MOSS. We could watch TV.

SERENA. I'm sick of TV.

MOSS. That's because you got one in your room. If I had a TV in my room, I'd lock the door and channel surf all day with no one getting in my way.

SERENA. Sssshhhh.

JESSIE. What?

SERENA. I thought I heard my dad. He'll be home any minute.

JESSIE. So what?

SERENA. So nothin'.

JESSIE. So she's not allowed to hang out with us. Daddy's princess.

SERENA. That's not it. I just don't like it here. Let's go somewhere else.

MOSS. Where?

SERENA. Dunno. Somewhere. Somewhere deadly fun.

JESSIE. That's nowhere.

MOSS. We could go to the movies.

JESSIE (*making fun of him*). "We could go to the movies."

MOSS. What's wrong with that? Brian might be there.

JESSIE. Will you stop yappin' about Brian? I don't want to see Brian and neither does Serena. Do you, Serena?

SERENA. No.

JESSIE. What's your problem? Why are you staring at her?

MOSS. I'm not staring at her. I'm just lookin' over there, awright?

JESSIE. Sure, Moss.

MOSS. I'm goin' to find Brian.

JESSIE. Not me. I'm done with Brian.

MOSS. That again. It wasn't Brian's fault.

JESSIE. Oh, no? Who grabbed the bag?

MOSS. It wasn't his fault he got caught.

JESSIE. Who's fault was it I spent the night at the police station?

MOSS. He didn't mean for that to happen.

JESSIE. Sure he didn't. That's why he told them I took the money.

MOSS. He never said that.

JESSIE. It took me all night to talk my way out of it. So much for trust. You'd think I'd learn.

MOSS. Brian'll make it up to you. He never forgets a favor.

JESSIE. I'm countin' on that. Serena, can I wear your bracelet again?

SERENA. This one?

JESSIE. Yeah. I love that. It's deadly.

SERENA. Here. *(She takes off the bracelet and puts it on JESSIE.)* Looks good on you.

JESSIE. Yeah. I love those smoky beads.

SERENA. You can keep it if you want to.

JESSIE. Really? Keep it?

SERENA. It looks better on you anyway.

JESSIE. You think so?

SERENA. Yeah.

JESSIE. It's like a present, right?

SERENA. Yeah.

JESSIE. Thanks. *(Pause.)* Guess you got plenty more where that came from. Hey, Moss... you got any smokes?

MOSS. Brian took 'em.

JESSIE. Got any money?

MOSS *(digging in his pockets)*. Two dollars.

JESSIE. Two dollars!

*(JESSIE and SERENA laugh.)*

MOSS. Shut up. I can't help it if that's all I have.

JESSIE. Wait. Where's the money your mom gave you for those school books?

MOSS. Forget that. Let's do something deadly fun.

JESSIE. Come on. We could use that money. Thirty dollars, wasn't it?

MOSS. It's for books.

JESSIE. So what? Give it here.

MOSS. Get away.

JESSIE. I only want some of it. Come on.

MOSS. I don't have it.

JESSIE. Let's go get it then.

MOSS. I said no.

JESSIE. You don't have it, do you?

MOSS. I wouldn't give it to you anyway.

JESSIE. Aawwww, did big brother Brian take it from his little brother? Bullied it out of you, I bet. Poor Mossie. Only got two dollars.

MOSS. Brian didn't take it. I gave it to him.

JESSIE. You gave it to him? What for?

MOSS. He needed it, awright?

JESSIE. Liar. He took it from you. He always does.

MOSS. Shut up. Besides, what've you got?

JESSIE. I'd rather have nothin' than brag about two dollars. Dumbass. How about Daddy's princess? Serena's got money.

SERENA. Spent it all on CDs.

MOSS. It's not fair. You got a TV in your room, too.

JESSIE. You got it all, Serena. Daddy's big bucks, this incredible place and every teacher in school in your hip pocket. Miss Honors class up her ass.



SERENA. I can't help it if that's where they put me. I hate it.

JESSIE. But you can get money, can't you?

SERENA. My mom took her purse with her.

*(MOSS takes out a knife and begins playing with it.)*

JESSIE. So freakin' boring.

MOSS. Nothin' ever happens around here.

JESSIE. Put that knife away. You'll hurt yourself.

MOSS. I can play with my own knife, can't I?

JESSIE. Hey. Let me see that.

MOSS. No. Get outa here.

JESSIE. That's Brian's knife.

MOSS. No, it's not. It's mine.

JESSIE. That's Brian's switchblade. I recognize it. It's got little skeletons on it.

MOSS. It's mine now.

JESSIE. You used your old lady's money to buy Brian's knife? No. Brian loves that knife. He wouldn't sell it to you for a hundred dollars.

MOSS. That's right.

JESSIE. Then how did you get it?

MOSS. Took it. Last night while he was sleepin' like a baby.

JESSIE. You're crazy. He'll kill you when he finds out.

MOSS. He took my book money. Said he needed it. Well, I need this knife. For protection.

JESSIE. You'll need it for protection all right when Brian finds out you took it.

MOSS. He won't find out.

JESSIE. He will if somebody tells him.

MOSS. But nobody will. If they want to keep breathing.

JESSIE. I'm not afraid of you. Tough boy.

MOSS (*playing with the knife*). Maybe you should be.

JESSIE. Serena?

SERENA. What?

JESSIE. Moss likes you.

MOSS. Shut up.

JESSIE. He's got it bad for you.

MOSS. Shut up. Don't listen to her. She's lookin' for trouble.

JESSIE. It's true. He's been drooling over you since you showed up.

MOSS. Liar.

JESSIE. Just thought Serena oughta know.

MOSS. She's not listenin' to you.

SERENA. Stop it, both of you. Let's do something.

MOSS. If you tell about the knife, I'll tell Brian about you.

JESSIE. He wouldn't believe anything you told him.

MOSS. Shut up about the knife and I won't tell about... well, you know.

JESSIE. If you tell Brian anything about that you'll wish you were dead.

SERENA. Hey. I got these.

JESSIE. What you got?

MOSS. Lemme see.

JESSIE. Yeah. Let's see...

SERENA. Promise you won't laugh.

MOSS (*putting away the knife*). It's stupid. I can tell already.

JESSIE. Shut up, Moss. What you got, Serena?

SERENA. I've got three of these. Fortunetelling fish.

MOSS. What?

JESSIE. Fortunetelling fish.

MOSS. Told you it was stupid.

JESSIE. You're the one who's stupid.

SERENA. You hold it in your hand and it tells your fortune by how it moves. There's a chart that tells you the meanings.

JESSIE. Cool. Moss, you go.

MOSS. I'm not goin'.

JESSIE. Let's hear your fortune. This oughta be good.

MOSS. Not me.

JESSIE. You chicken? (*She teases MOSS with chicken sounds.*)

MOSS. I'm not chicken, you are. You go first.

JESSIE. If you're not chicken, then why won't you go first?

MOSS. I always have to go first.

SERENA. I'll go first. Jessie, you don't think it's stupid, do you?

MOSS. I think it's stupid.

JESSIE. You're stupid. Let's see, Serena. (*JESSIE takes the cellophane fish out of its wrapper and places it in the palm of her hand which she holds out in front of her.*) Its tail. It's moving! Look!

SERENA. It's all wavy.

MOSS. Jeeze!

JESSIE. What does it mean?

SERENA. Here. Look it up. (*SERENA gives the wrapper to MOSS. JESSIE snatches the wrapper.*)

JESSIE. Don't give it to him. Give it here.

SERENA. It's still moving. What does it say?

JESSIE. Moving tail. Independence.

MOSS. What?

JESSIE. Independence, dumbass!

MOSS. What's that mean?

JESSIE. It means on your own, stupid.

MOSS. I know that. I mean what's the fortune?

SERENA. We have to figure it out. Wait and see what happens.

MOSS. That's stupid.

JESSIE. Ignore him, Serena. Independence is a great fortune. Maybe it means you'll be out on your own before you know it.

SERENA. I'd give anything to be on my own. Away from home.

JESSIE. Yeah. That'd be great.

SERENA. I hate it here. I hate it so much. I wish I was dead.

*(JESSIE and MOSS exchange an uncomfortable look.)*

JESSIE. Hey. You don't mean that, Princess.

SERENA. Can we go to your house, Jessie?

JESSIE. I hate my house. Ma's always home. Breathin' down my back. Talkin' some religious shit.

SERENA *(looking out the window)*. Yeah. My dad's always on my case. He inspects my homework every night.

MOSS. Why?

JESSIE. Because she's Daddy's princess, that's why.

SERENA. He's gonna be home soon. I know it.

JESSIE. Then we'll leave. But I like it here, don't you, Moss?

MOSS. Yeah. It's clean. Shiny.

JESSIE. And no one to bother us.

SERENA. Yeah. I can do whatever I want. My parents just don't like people over is all.