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*Dramatic Publishing*

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A man with light-colored hair, wearing a dark jacket, white shirt, dark tie, and a plaid kilt with a sporran, stands on a stage with his arms raised in a dramatic gesture. He is looking upwards. To his left is a small wooden table with a bottle of J. & F. Martell Cognac, a bottle of J. & F. Martell Brandy, and several glasses. To his right is a wooden chair. The background is a dark, wood-paneled wall.

# *A View of the Harbor*

*Comedy/Drama by Richard Dresser*

# A View of the Harbor

**Comedy/Drama.** *By Richard Dresser. Cast: 2m., 2w.* Nick is a child of privilege who grew up with every possible advantage. But along the way he came to believe that he could never measure up to the demands of his father, Daniel, a powerful and mercurial man who has run the family businesses with ruthless cunning. So Nick disappears, reinventing himself as a blue-collar worker in a factory owned by his family. For the first time, he takes control of his life. He works hard, makes friends, and falls in love with Paige, a beautiful young woman. He discovers that he's a lot happier getting by on a living wage than wallowing in the limitless wealth of his family. He's free. When Nick hears from his sister, Kathryn, that his father has had a stroke, he realizes that he must face the towering figure in his life, the man who caused him to run away. So Nick and Paige travel to the coast of Maine, where Daniel and Kathryn live in the rambling, mysterious, run-down mansion where Nick grew up. Nick finds himself yanked back into the increasingly twisted orbit of his family. Paige is shocked to see the confident man she fell in love with reverting before her eyes to a small frightened child. Paige becomes the catalyst for long-buried family secrets finally seeing the light of day. In the end, the family is reconfigured in surprising ways as Nick reconnects with his sister and finally finds the strength to face the demons in his life. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: V37.*

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# **A VIEW OF THE HARBOR**

By

**RICHARD DRESSER**



**Dramatic Publishing**

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The Contemporary American Theater Festival, Shepherds-  
town, W.V., presented the world premiere of *A View of the  
Harbor* July 2008, directed by Charles Towers, with the  
following:

Nick . . . . . Kelsey J. Nash  
Paige . . . . . Anne Marie Nest  
Kathryn . . . . . Andrea Cirie  
Daniel . . . . . Anderson Matthews

### PRODUCTION STAFF

Set Design . . . . . Robert Klingelhoefer  
Costume Design . . . . . Devon Painter  
Lighting Design. . . . . Colin K. Bills  
Sound Design . . . . . Matthew M. Nielson  
Stage Manager . . . . . Lori M. Doyle  
Asst. Stage Manager . . . . . Laura Wilson

Production Assistant . . . . . Helen Bennett  
Casting. . . . . Pat McCorkle C.S.A.  
Understudies. . . . . Clare Schmidt, Joe Yates

Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Lowell, Mass., Charles Towers, artistic director, Tom Parrish, executive director and honorary producers, Daniel and Mary Frantz presented the regional premiere of *A View of the Harbor* January 8, 2009. The production was directed by Charles Towers with the following:

Nick . . . . . Kyle Fabel  
Paige . . . . . Stephanie Fieger  
Kathryn . . . . . Andrea Cirie  
Daniel . . . . . Anderson Matthews

PRODUCTION STAFF

Scene Designer . . . . . Richard Wadsworth Chambers  
Costume Designer. . . . . Devon Painter  
Lighting Designer . . . . . Brian J. Lilienthal  
Stage Manager . . . . . Emily F. McMullen

*Special acknowledgment*

Assistant Scene Designer, Bailey Costa

# A VIEW OF THE HARBOR

## CHARACTERS

NICK, 30s

PAIGE, 20s

DANIEL, Nick's father

KATHRYN, Nick's sister

## SETTING

The play takes place on the porch and in the yard of Daniel's house in Maine.

It's a rundown house with a ramshackle porch, completely open except for a single screen door. The only screens are on this door.

## TIME

Last summer.



# A VIEW OF THE HARBOR

## SCENE ONE

*(The YARD, early morning. NICK and PAIGE are staring at the house. They have a backpack and a suitcase.)*

PAIGE. Oh my God. This is it?

NICK. Home sweet home.

PAIGE. You poor baby. Should we go in?

NICK. Let's not.

PAIGE. We drive all night and we aren't even going inside?

NICK. I don't want to surprise him. He has a gun.

PAIGE. You know, I'm getting just a little creeped out.

What should we do? I'm exhausted.

NICK. Sleep out here till he wakes up?

PAIGE. *Here?*

NICK. Haven't you ever slept outside?

PAIGE. By accident. After a long night of very poor decision-making. Please don't make me sleep out here with the animals and the trees and the stuff we can't even see.

NICK. It's okay, honey. Come here. *(He embraces her.)*

PAIGE. Look at that house. This isn't a criticism but even the people who worked for us lived better than that. You're a miracle for surviving.

NICK. Hey, I just didn't know any better.

PAIGE. I feel guilty. I was given so much. Not that we were rich rich.

NICK. But rich.

PAIGE. Not like some. In prep school I had the only dad who didn't have a jet and never got kidnapped. But frankly, all I had to do was think of something and it was mine. It was like having super-powers. I can't imagine growing up here.

NICK. The house was always cold and there was never any food. One night in the winter when we were little my sister and I woke up shivering. The wind was practically blowing right through the house so we got up. And my parents were gone.

PAIGE. They just left you here all alone?

NICK. We were scared and hungry so we walked to the neighbors. They fed us and gave us a warm bed and we didn't leave for two days. That was the happiest time of my life. The third day my sister was looking out the window and she said, "Dear God, they're coming." And there were my parents trudging through the snow like ghosts to take us back.

PAIGE. And of course you went. What choice does a child have? No food, barely a roof over your head, negligent parents... (*Then.*) What was that sound? Did you hear it? God, I hate nature. You know what I love? Hotels. Why aren't we in a hotel? I would have paid. I have my flaws but I'm always there for the less fortunate.

NICK. Like me?

PAIGE. So...how bad was it?

NICK. What?

PAIGE. The stroke.

NICK. Bad enough to get me back here.

PAIGE. Lucky you. I never got a chance to say goodbye to my dog Whizzer. I was off at college and Whizzer went crazy. He started attacking people and my mom called and said they had to do something but I was in the middle of finals and I screamed at her to let Whizzer live. Then Whizzer killed our cat and then our bird. And then he knocked over a stroller and, well, to make a long legal-medical-veterinary story short, my parents put Whizzer to sleep before I came home. At least you're getting a chance to say goodbye to your dad.

NICK. Yeah, this is great.

PAIGE (*looking at the house*). Oh my God!

NICK. What?

PAIGE. I just saw something moving in the house.

NICK. What was it?

PAIGE. I don't know. It didn't even look human.

NICK. I guess I should have told you about my family.

PAIGE. What do you mean? What's wrong with them?

NICK. Are you scared?

PAIGE. Not really. Not yet. Are you?

NICK. Why would I be scared?

PAIGE. If my family looked like that I'd sure be scared.

NICK. I guess we can't put this off any longer. (*Calls, but not loudly.*) Hello?

PAIGE. You don't want them to hear you?

NICK (*slightly louder*). Hello?

PAIGE (*much louder*). Hello?

NICK. Hey! He might be sleeping.

PAIGE. I'm sorry. That was thoughtless.

NICK. Come here.

PAIGE. What?

NICK. I couldn't have come back here without you.

PAIGE. You're such a tough guy. I've never seen you like this.

NICK. I already miss our old life in the city.

PAIGE. You mean from yesterday? That life?

NICK. We're so lucky, we've got it so good. Let's leave.

PAIGE. Really?

NICK. Come on, while we still can!

*(The door opens and KATHRYN sticks her head out. She stares at them.)*

KATHRYN *(calls inside house)*. He's here. And he brought one. *(The door slams shut.)*

PAIGE. Maybe we should leave. Maybe that was a good idea.

NICK. We missed our chance. It's too late.

*(The door opens and KATHRYN comes out. She has a tray with cups and a tarnished silver coffee urn and a basket of rolls.)*

KATHRYN. What luck! You're just in time for breakfast.

*(DANIEL comes out with a cane. DANIEL and KATHRYN sit down.)*

NICK. This is Paige.

PAIGE. Hello! Nice to meet you.

KATHRYN. There are only two chairs and we got them.

NICK. I'll get more chairs.

*(NICK goes inside. PAIGE goes up the steps and enters the porch, leaving the screen door partially open.)*

KATHRYN. Please close the screen door. It's black fly season.

PAIGE. Does it make any difference? There aren't any other screens...

KATHRYN. They'll eat us alive! Close the door!

*(PAIGE closes the screen door. DANIEL and KATHRYN stare at her.)*

DANIEL. Look at you. All tricked-out for a family visitation.

PAIGE. I was sorry to hear...

DANIEL. You were sorry to hear what?

PAIGE. About your...condition.

DANIEL. And what condition is that?

PAIGE. Your stroke.

DANIEL. What are you saying? What is she saying? Have I had a stroke?

KATHRYN. That's what the doctors said.

DANIEL. Dear God, why didn't you tell me?

KATHRYN. It would only worry you and that's what caused the stroke in the first place. But now that you've been told, we're right back on that slippery slope, headed for another one. But far far worse.

PAIGE. I'm so sorry, I had no idea! I'm very tired. Nick just said you had a stroke.

KATHRYN. Oh? And who is Nick?

PAIGE. Your son?

KATHRYN. My son?

DANIEL. She has no son. Her marriage ended without issue.

PAIGE. I'm sorry.

DANIEL. Who is Nick? Not my Nick...

KATHRYN. She must be talking about Edward.

DANIEL. Why does she call him Nick?

KATHRYN. Nick's my brother.

PAIGE. So that person getting the chairs is not Nick?

KATHRYN. That person is Edward. Nick's brother.

PAIGE. Oh. So you must be Nick's sister.

KATHRYN. And Edward's. Who did you think I was?

DANIEL. She thought you were his dear old mum. This one is nobody's mum. Her marriage ended without issue.

*(NICK comes out of the house with two rotting wicker chairs.)*

NICK. This is the best I could find.

KATHRYN. I'm afraid the rats have had their way with the chairs. Do you like rats?

PAIGE. I can't say that I do.

KATHRYN. Then you won't like ours. They're so...self-possessed.

DANIEL. Not like the old days. They used to scurry away when they saw us. There was deference, a bit of grudging respect for a higher species. Now they stare with pure malice. *(To PAIGE.)* Like they want to eat you up, inch by inch, starting with your tender little toes.

KATHRYN. I thought we'd put you in Hyperion, Eddie.

NICK. All right.

KATHRYN. And we'll put her in the butler's quarters.

NICK. That's not necessary. We'll stay in the same room.

KATHRYN (*to PAIGE*). It was originally the butler's quarters but we re-decorated. I think you'll be very happy. It faces the harbor.

NICK. But there's no window.

KATHRYN. That doesn't change what it faces.

NICK. We're adults. We'd like to stay in the same room. I mean it, Sissy.

KATHRYN. Did you want coffee?

PAIGE. Oh, please! (*KATHRYN pours coffee for PAIGE.*)  
Thank you, Sissy.

KATHRYN. I'm not your sister. My name is Kathryn.

PAIGE. All right.

KATHRYN. Would you say it, please? Kathryn.

PAIGE. Kathryn.

KATHRYN. Kathryn.

PAIGE. Kathryn.

KATHRYN. Kathryn.

PAIGE. Kathryn.

KATHRYN. Good. The cups are chipped. They belonged to Grandmother. I'd hate to see you slice those sweet lips to bloody shreds.

PAIGE. Oh, I'll be careful.

KATHRYN. Roll?

PAIGE. Thank you! They look lovely.

KATHRYN. They're even lovelier with blueberry jam.

PAIGE. That sounds perfect!

KATHRYN. I'm afraid we don't have any so you'll just have to do without.

*(PAIGE and NICK try to bite into the rock-hard rolls without success.)*

NICK. Kath? In what quarry did you find these rolls?

KATHRYN. We buy in bulk. These are the last of the winter collection.

*(NICK and PAIGE give up on the rolls.)*

NICK. Is this it for breakfast?

KATHRYN. Father sometimes has a cigar on special occasions.

DANIEL. I don't believe I'll be having one this morning.

KATHRYN. Oh, I do love the ocean. You could disappear into those waters and never be found. There's a ledge out there, a perfectly inviting little rock island at low tide. A man once took his wife there for a picnic. He rowed her out and they put down a tablecloth in the sunshine and they had crabmeat sandwiches and a bottle of red wine. Then they lay on the tablecloth and she started to fall asleep as the tide came in. And he very quietly got in the rowboat and rowed away as the water covered the ledge and swallowed her up. And she was never found.

PAIGE. Why did he do that?

KATHRYN. What a glorious morning, we are truly blessed! Eddie, your slut seems like a bit of a simpleton.

PAIGE. Excuse me?

KATHRYN. I wasn't talking to you.

NICK. Stop it, Sissy. Paige is very smart.

DANIEL. But you'll grant she's a slut?

NICK. She isn't a slut or a simpleton.

DANIEL. Well, this is something new for you, my boy. But let me say there was nothing wrong with the tainted



fruit you brought home in the past. We're delighted to see you, Eddie. It warms my heart.

NICK. I want you to treat Paige like a member of the family.

DANIEL. Oh, I don't imagine she'd survive *that*.

NICK. How are you, honey? Are you all right?

PAIGE. To tell you the truth, I'm a little cold.

KATHRYN. Such a delicate little flower.

PAIGE. Can we go inside?

DANIEL. You won't find it much warmer in there. The damn pilot light's gone out.

PAIGE. Can't you light it?

KATHRYN. Light it ourselves? Look at us, we'd blow up the house. If you want a job done right, get someone else to do it.

DANIEL. Jo's the only one who could properly light it. Jo was a marvel. Jo would crawl under the house through a moonscape of rat droppings and fix the plumbing. Jo could climb up on the roof and bang in new shingles. Jo always had projects, a moat around the gravestones, a maze for the rabbits. But Jo is gone. The marriage was without issue.

*(KATHRYN goes inside.)*

NICK. You've upset Kath.

DANIEL. Facts are facts, she wasn't fecund.

NICK. We don't know that.

DANIEL. We know the marriage was without issue.

NICK. That shouldn't have been a big surprise.

DANIEL. It was a brilliant union. They cooked together, they read together, they sang together, they built a quilt.

They walked down to the water every day at sunset, hand in hand. But there was no issue.

NICK. There was no issue because Jo was a woman.

DANIEL. My feckless son always has the last word. My feckless son and my less than fecund daughter. Is that it for coffee?

NICK. We're going in.

DANIEL. Yes, show your friend her room. It's a bit small, but it's dark.

NICK. We'll be in the same room. We're not children.

DANIEL. You're in my house and I have the run of it. Don't forget that while you're rolling around in sweaty congress.

*(NICK and PAIGE go inside.)*

*DANIEL is alone on the porch as LIGHTS FADE.)*