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Dramatic Publishing

RIVERVIEW, TAPE 23

A One-Act Play
by
COLLEEN NEUMAN



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(RIVERVIEW, TAPE 23)

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RIVERVIEW, TAPE 23

A One-Act Play
For Three Women

CHARACTERS

KATHY DAVENPORT a writer for a magazine, 40
LYDIA PARRISH a retirement home resident, in her 80s
MRS. TALBOT a nurse, middle-aged

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A retirement home.

RIVERVIEW, TAPE 23

SCENE: *A recreation room in a retirement home.*

AT RISE: *Stage is dimly lit. KATHY enters from hall carrying briefcase, folders, car keys. She is disorganized and in a hurry. Turns on light and drops keys. Lights come up. Picks up keys, drops and then picks up papers. Gets to table and slides everything on to it. Pulls off coat, hat, muffler, mittens and drops them on chair. Puts cassette in tape player and pushes button.*

KATHY. *Start tape. (Opening folder.)*

(TALBOT yanks open hall door, enters, stops just inside door. Very put out.)

TALBOT. Mrs. Davenport!

KATHY *(tries to appear relaxed, prepared)*. Yes. Hi. Good morning.

TALBOT *(crossing to table)*. Well, here you are!

KATHY. Of course I'm here. And it's just barely ten...

TALBOT. You should have checked in at the front desk. We've been looking everywhere for you. Mrs. Parrish has been waiting and waiting. *(Starting to leave.)*

KATHY. Wait, wait a second. *(TALBOT stops.)* We agreed I'm supposed to be in here in the rec room at ten o'clock and then you bring the residents in...

TALBOT (*officious*). You were late last week.

KATHY. I was a little late...

TALBOT. Seventeen minutes!

KATHY. It was that icy morning, the roads were terrible...

TALBOT. I can't control the weather, Mrs. Davenport. From now on you'll just have to check in at the reception desk before you come in here. Then we'll know you're here. I don't have time to play hide and seek. My staff is so busy already and to have to somehow find the time to bring residents in here...

KATHY. Mrs. Talbot, you know I'd rather be interviewing these people in their rooms. They'd be more comfortable, you and your nurses wouldn't have to bother...

TALBOT. No, no, no. Only staff and relatives allowed in the rooms. I've told you that.

KATHY. I know, but...

TALBOT. If you want to continue with these interviews, Mrs. Davenport, you'll have to abide by our rules. Retirement homes have to have rules. You know that. State regulations.

KATHY. I know all that, but...

TALBOT. Riverview has a fine reputation, Mrs. Davenport, because we have schedules and because we have rules. (*Pointedly.*) And need I remind you again that this is a *no smoking area*?

KATHY. I told you! It was the machine! (*Sees the futility of protest.*) Okay. I won't smoke. (*TALBOT waits. Begrudgingly.*) I promise.

TALBOT. All right. Now, if you're ready for Mrs. Parrish?

KATHY. Yes. Of course I am.

TALBOT. She's right out here in the hall. I'll just be a second. (*Almost out door, turns for a final word.*) This room is to be left as you found it.

KATHY (*has heard this all before*). I know. (TALBOT exits. KATHY quickly looks through papers, trying to get organized.)

(TALBOT re-enters pushing LYDIA in a wheelchair.)

TALBOT (*with false cheerfulness*). Here we are! (*Bumps into door.*) Oops! Sorry, dear. These old wheelchairs are so clumsy. The new electric ones are much nicer. (*Raises voice as though to a deaf person.*) I bet you'd like one of those nice, new electric chairs, wouldn't you, Lydia?

LYDIA (*a thin voice*). You mean like they have in the prisons?

TALBOT (*takes her a moment to comprehend this*). Oh my! Goodness no! I didn't mean that. (*Raises voice again.*) I meant an electric wheelchair.

LYDIA. Oh. They have those for the crippled prisoners?

TALBOT. No, no. Oh, never mind. Well, here we are, Mrs. Davenport. Where would you like her?

KATHY (*tries to sound warm, welcoming*). Where would you like to sit, Mrs. Parrish? You can stay in your chair or you could sit in one of these chairs here at the table?

LYDIA. I'm fine right here. You just push me a little closer to that table. (*Reaching out a little bit for table edge.*)

TALBOT (*moves a chair away from table so there is room for wheelchair*). All righty. (*Bumps wheelchair into table.*) Oops! Too close. There. Are you all right?

LYDIA. I'm all right.

TALBOT (*raising voice*). Are you sure?

LYDIA (*thinly veiled irritation*). I'm all right.

TALBOT. Well, fine then. I'll be going. (*Crossing to door.*) I'll be back to get you in a little while. Remember, Lydia, you have to be back in your room for lunch at eleven

o'clock. Sharp. (*Pausing at door.*) You two have a real nice chat now. (*Exit. KATHY and LYDIA look after her with the same irritated look on their faces. They are unaware of the other's similar reaction.*)

KATHY (*sitting to right of table, surreptitiously checking papers.*) Well. Good morning, Mrs. ...(*Quick glance at paper.*) ...Parrish. (*No response. LYDIA is looking pointedly away from her.*) I'm Kathy Davenport. I write for *Home Life Weekly*. Remember? I spoke to you when I set up this interview. It's nice to see you again. (*Waits.*) Do you remember when I spoke to you? (*No response. KATHY raises voice like TALBOT did.*) I said, I'm Kathy Davenport. From *Home Life*...

LYDIA (*quietly, not looking at her. Voice doesn't sound old now.*) I remember.

KATHY. Oh. Good. (*Again raising voice.*) Mrs. Parrish, are you hard of hearing?

LYDIA. Not today.

KATHY. Oh. Okay. Good. Well...(*Opening notebook, poisoning pen.*)...as you can see, I have my machine going here and I'll be taking some notes, too. So I guess we can just get started. Now, our topic is "What was so good about the good old days?" You must have wonderful memories...

LYDIA (*sharp*). I was ready at nine o'clock.

KATHY. You've been waiting since nine o'clock?

LYDIA. I was ready at nine o'clock at the front desk.

KATHY. I'm so sorry. I never get here until ten. Someone should have told you. And then I come right in here. Except starting tomorrow I have to check in at the front desk first...

LYDIA (*very sharp*). I won't be there tomorrow!

KATHY (*a little taken aback*). No. I suppose not. I really am sorry.