

ElderSpeak

Jeanette Mathewes Stevens





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ELDERSPEAK

By Jeanette Mathewes Stevens

CAST

JOAN: A woman in her late 50's, professional, intelligent, caring.

MOM: A woman over 75, smart, funny and very frustrated.

NURSE DUNBAR: A woman in her late 40's-mid 50's, very sweet.

SYLVIA: A woman in her early 60's, funny ball of fire.

MEDFORD: Late 50's – early 60's professional salesman.

STEDMAN: 70+ gentleman, opinionated, and funny.

LOTTIE: A hot-to-trot senior lady, Shadyview Meadows resident.

SAM: Lottie's cohort, simple, single-minded Shadyview Meadows resident.

CLARA: A colorful character, Shadyview Meadows resident.

NURSE HARRINGTON: Bumbling nurse.

At Rise: Music plays, then fades...JOAN crosses DC and addresses the audience.

JOAN: Hi there. Got a minute? I've got to talk to someone. Can I talk to you? This has been a week and a half; let me tell you! Oh by the way, my name's Joan. The week started out normal...but here lately, normal has been a bit abnormal. The alarm went off and I crawled out of bed and woke up my husband and Timothy, our youngest, the only one still living at home. My friends are always talking about how lonely it is to be empty nesters...I'd just like to have the chance to find out. I'd arranged to go in to the office a little late. I needed to stop by Shadyview Meadows to check on my mother. Mom broke her leg a couple of weeks ago. There was just no way, what with work and everything else going on, to keep her at home. The doctor suggested a rehab facility. Shadyview Meadows seemed like the perfect place...close by work, approved by our insurance company and the staff there is so sweet. That morning when I got to Shadyview Meadows, Mom wasn't herself...her usual self. She just wasn't 'with it.'

(JOAN crosses DR as NURSE DUNBAR enters UL pushing MOM in a wheelchair. As she enters, NURSE DUNBAR fusses around MOM talking to her in a syrupy sweet high-pitched voice as if she were talking to a child...a stupid child)

NURSE DUNBAR: Now, don't we feel much more comfy? Isn't it soooo much better to be all shiny and clean to start a new day? We never know when we might have company and we wouldn't want anyone to see us in our all-wrinkly, slept-in nighty...now would we?

JOAN: Hi, Mom.

DUNBAR: See, I told you. Our daughter has come to see us. Isn't that wonderful? Aren't we glad we're not in our nightclothes, but dressed looking fresh and pretty for our little girl?

JOAN: Oh, hello, Nurse Dunbar. Mom, how're you feeling? Did you sleep well? Is the cast on your leg giving you trouble?

DUNBAR: *(talking to JOAN)* Oh, we slept just fine. She was a good girl...had to ring for help to use the bedpan only once last night. That big old cast is a bit of a bother, but the doctor said our bones are healing right on schedule. *(talking to MOM)* Tell your daughter how well we're doing this morning.

(MOM is frowning and silent...sometimes looking down and sometimes glaring at the attendant)

JOAN: Glad to hear you're doing so well. Sorry I can't stay long. I've got to get to work...just wanted to check on you. I'll stop by again this afternoon. Do you need anything...want me to bring you anything special?

(MOM starts to answer, but DUNBAR answers for her, constantly fussing over MOM, fixing her blanket, her pillow behind her back...etc. This irritates MOM)

DUNBAR: No, we don't need anything. We have everything we need, but...well, we would like some more of those little chocolate candies...you know the ones with the little white sugar beads sprinkled all over them. We do love those. *(talking to MOM)* Don't we, sweetie?

JOAN: I'll be glad to get some more chocolate nonpareils for you. I remember, they were Dad's favorite, too. Maybe that'll cheer you up a bit, Mom. You look a little down this morning. Take care and rest. You're so lucky to be in Shadyview Meadows...to have such nice people around you. They take such good care of you here. They are so sweet.

(JOAN gives MOM a hug...MOM gives JOAN a dirty look)

JOAN: *(looking concerned at MOM's behavior, waves to DUNBAR and MOM)* Bye for now. I'll see you again this afternoon.

DUNBAR: *(pats MOM on head...MOM pulls away)* Bye! Now don't you worry. We have a wonderful day planned. First we're going to have a tasty, healthy breakfast. Then the doctor will drop by to check on us. *(leaning towards JOAN & changing her voice to a more professional tone)* I'll make sure you get the report on her progress.

(DUNBAR pushes the wheelchair with MOM and exits UL, JOAN crosses DC)

JOAN: *(talking to audience)* I was concerned about Mom, but I didn't have time to really think about it. Nurse Dunbar had said Mom's leg was healing properly and that was the most important thing, right?

(JOAN crosses DL as SYLVIA enters UR and crosses to her)

JOAN: *(looking around confused)* Sylvia, what's going on? Where's my desk?

SYLVIA: Mike called everyone into his office this morning to say corporate wants our office to project a new image...a more modern "with it" look. So, you and I are now in the back where the storage room used to be. They've hired a new person to be at the front. You know "first impressions are lasting impressions," to quote our fearless leader.

JOAN: A new person? Who is it? Anyone I know?

SYLVIA: I don't think so. I believe she's the daughter of one of the big wigs in the downtown office. Your son might know her. She graduated from college the same year.

JOAN: For fourteen years, I've met the clients when they came in. I was here when Mr. Brackett was boss...long before Mike replaced him. Now, my desk is in the storage room? Where are all my pictures and plaques...my Employee-of-the-Year awards?

SYLVIA: With your desk, everything is back there...desk, plaques, pictures, your cute little frogs. I made sure they didn't get broken. But, my guess is you'll be up here in the front a good bit of the time because you have to train the new person! *(JOAN slumps slightly)* It's a bummer, all right...but at least you weren't told to dye!

JOAN: To DIE?

SYLVIA: Yeah, dye. (*indicates her hair*) Well, he didn't actually tell me to dye my hair, but his meaning was clear enough. Don't you know, once you have gray hair, you become incompetent and incapable? A friend of mine went for a job interview a few weeks ago. The company's office was on the fourth floor of a building with no elevator. The interviewer took one look at my friend's gray hair and asked, "Can you climb stairs?" My friend answered, "How do you think I got here?"

JOAN: (*laughs*) Right! Did they think your friend had said, "Beam me up, Scottie?" Hasn't that business heard of the Americans With Disabilities Act?

SYLVIA: I guess we ought to be glad we still have a job. It could be worse. You know old Medford?

JOAN: Ron? He's one of the company's best salesmen. He's been here since the beginning.

SYLVIA: He WAS one of the company's best salesmen. Evidently, the sales force needs a new image, too.

JOAN: But Ron has the best sales record! He knows all the contacts and has tons of experience.

SYLVIA: A lot of good it did him...experience may be all well and good, but when it comes in a package that's wrinkled and gray-haired...it doesn't fit the image. This reminds me of something I read in the paper a while back. A woman filed a complaint under the Age Discrimination Employment Act, alleging her boss fired her because she was too old.

JOAN: The boss just flat out told her she was too old?

SYLVIA: Yeah, and he did the same thing to three other women.

JOAN: How dare he!

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!