

Keys to Her Kingdom

Dorey Schmidt



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ArtAge Publications

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KEYS TO HER KINGDOM

by Dorey Schmidt

CAST

SYLVIA: Woman, 70s-80s, active, but conflicted.

HANNAH: Woman, 70s-80s, brisk, opinionated.

RUTH: Woman, 70s-80s, soft calm nature.

DEE-DEE: Sylvia's daughter, caring but controlling.

MORGAN: Social worker (M or F), staff member at VistaView.

Place

Living room in a small apartment in VistaView retirement community.

Time

The present. Late afternoon.

Production Notes

This play may stand alone or be used as a discussion starter for senior issues which include driving, family relationships, health, independent living, pets, etc. It is suitable for a fully-mounted production, staged reading, or performed using readers theatre.

Setting: A living room, Small table with phone front center, a small sofa or love seat, a single chair, dated furnishings, family photos suggestive of an elderly resident.

At Rise: Stage is empty. Rattle of keys. Door opens. Sylvia, well-dressed, but visibly agitated, enters with her purse and bag of cat food in one hand, plus a small cat carrier in other hand. She puts the bag and her purse on table. Crossing to the couch, she sets the carrier on the floor.

(SOUND CUE: Cat meows loudly)

SYLVIA: Ohh, Kitty. This has been a terrible day for both of us. (*taps cat carrier gently*) I know you're upset. But the vet said you need to stay in there for now.

(*SOUND CUE: Cat meows loudly*)

SYLVIA: You might as well hush. I've got more problems than your sick stomach. (*jumps up*) It really wasn't my fault. But Dee-Dee won't believe that. (*paces back and forth*)

SYLVIA: Maybe I won't tell her. But Dee-Dee will notice the broken tail-light. Maybe I could hide the car until it's fixed. But I don't have a garage now. Just a parking space.

(*There's a knock on door. It opens slowly.*)

SYLVIA: Oh, no ! If that's Dee-Dee...

HANNAH: Yoo-hoo. (*enters*) Didn't mean to scare you.

SYLVIA: Hannah?

(*RUTH crowds into the room behind HANNAH*)

SYLVIA: And Ruth. How did you get in? For a minute, I thought it was Dee-Dee.

HANNAH: No, just us. (*holds up keys and rattles them*) You left your keys in the door. Again. (*hands keys to SYLVIA*)

RUTH: So, we came on in. Is this a bad time?

SYLVIA: No, not really. I just got home.

HANNAH: We know. We were out walking. Our daily constitutional. Gotta keep the old blood circulating.

RUTH: We try to walk every afternoon, but my constitution doesn't seem to get any stronger. (*laughs*)

SYLVIA: I may be walking a lot more . . . soon. Won't you have a seat?

HANNAH: That depends. Where's your cat?

SYLVIA: Kitty's in her carrier. You don't have to worry. She won't pester you.

RUTH: That's the strangest thing. Cats always seem to go straight to the person who doesn't like them.

HANNAH: I never said I don't like cats. I just don't like them *on* me. I think I may be allergic.

(SOUND CUE: *Cat meows*)

SYLVIA: Uh-oh. She heard your voice. Hush, Kitty. Hannah doesn't want you in her lap. I just brought her back from the vet, and her feelings are pretty ruffled. In fact, so are mine.

HANNAH: Okay, tell us about it. We saw your car when you parked it. Does the other car look as bad as yours? (*giggles*)

RUTH: Sylvia's car doesn't look that bad. The important thing is, what happened?

SYLVIA: You girls may think you're very funny, but I don't think it's funny at all.

HANNAH: Were you hurt? Do you have whiplash? Some idiot rear-ended me once at a stoplight. I was in therapy for six months. I still have my neck brace if you need it.

RUTH: Hush, Hannah. Accidents happen. I don't know any driver who's never had at least one little fender-bender.

SYLVIA: Well, you're looking at one. I never had any accident until now.

RUTH: Do you have auto insurance?

SYLVIA: With a five hundred dollar deductible. But that's nothing compared to what I may lose.

HANNAH: Then spill it. What's bugging you?

SYLVIA: I don't want to talk about it.

RUTH: Come on, Hannah, let's go. I think Sylvia's too upset.

SYLVIA: No. Wait. Don't go. Please sit down.

(All sit)

SYLVIA: I had to take Kitty to the vet. Then I drove over to PetSmart to get some special cat food. When I came out and got in the car —

HANNAH: *(interrupts)* Someone was rushing to get your spot and banged into the back of you.

SYLVIA: No, but no matter how it happened, Dee-Dee will blame me, and Sammy will want to know all the details.

RUTH: Just tell your kids it wasn't your fault...was it?

SYLVIA: No. I was backing out of my parking space and another car behind me backed out at the same time. Neither of us saw the other, so we hit right in the middle.

HANNAH: Did you look both ways before you backed?

SYLVIA: Of course I did. I always do. I didn't see a car coming either way, or any taillights behind me.

HANNAH: So you kept on backing, and there was a big smash, right?

RUTH: Hannah, can't you see she feels bad enough?

SYLVIA: Read my lips: It's not the damage to the car that's troubling me. That can be fixed. But now my children will want me to stop driving. They've already talked to me about it.

HANNAH: Oh, no. The old time-to-take-away-Mom's-keys game.

RUTH: It's not a game; it's a serious question. Everyone who lives long enough has been there and done that. Or will someday soon.

SYLVIA: I'm not everyone. I'm *not* ready to give up my car. No way.

RUTH: I wasn't either.

SYLVIA: Then why did you stop driving? You're younger than I am.

RUTH: I was having mini-strokes. Not safe, for me or the other people on the road. I could pass out any minute. When I watched my grandson drive away in my pretty little red car, I could hardly stand it.

HANNAH: That's what other people have told me. So I'm not going to give up my car until I'm ready. I'm strong and healthy, and Sylvia is, too.

RUTH: Hannah, dear. Even healthy older people can have problems, like poor vision or hearing.

SYLVIA: Dee-Dee and Sammy keep talking about my cataracts. But I had them fixed last year. My vision is better than 20/20.

HANNAH: Mine's good, too. When I renewed my driver's license, I passed the eye test just fine.

RUTH: You mean that test where the clerk holds up her fingers and asks how many? (*sarcastically*) That's a really sophisticated eye test, isn't it?

SYLVIA: Now, girls, don't fuss. I need you to help me think this through.

HANNAH: What's to think about? Just don't do it. Don't let your kids tell you when it's time to stop driving. When I renewed my license, the state gave me permission to drive for five more years.

RUTH: But that could change. Some states test elders every year or two—

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!