

A Good Neighbor

A one act monologue

By Kelley Nicole Girod

A GOOD NEIGHBOR, A PLAY BY KELLEY NICOLE GIROD, DIRECTED BY
KATHY GAIL MACGOWAN, STARRING LUCY MCMICHAEL

Alice, a 70 year old white woman, sits in a room in a local police station at a bare table. There is a soggy paper cup in front of her with what was once hot tea. She looks straight ahead as if in a daze. Her fingers tremble as she touches a place on her head where there is a noticeable bruise. We hear footsteps approaching and the sound of a door opening.

ALICE

Oh Mitchell! How are you! So good to see you, wish it were under different-

She touches the bruise on her head.

Oh this! Mitchell, really it's nothing, and I wouldn't have even come down here if it weren't for Mabel, she insisted, and I-

Well, the whole thing is just crazy to me Mitchell. Never in my life have I had something like this..And now here I am sitting in a police station like some common criminal! (she lets out a loud unnatural laugh that almost ends in a whimper). Well, Mabel said if I didn't, press charges, it would be hard to get the insurance to cover any potential medical bills resulting from...this... (her voice finally breaks). I know Mitchell, I know I didn't do anything wrong...

Mitchell hands her a tissue. She dabs her eyes.

Thank you Mitchell.

Just start from the beginning? Just tell it right? Ok, well, everything was going just like it always does. You know I go to see Doctor Durell every other Thursday. We're working on getting my blood pressure down, changed my diet and everything. On some pills now, the name escapes me, I'm normally good with these things but under the circumstances.

(Pause)

Ok, right, that doesn't matter. Well, I walk into Doctor Durell's. I greet Mandy and Adam and all of them just like normal. We get to making small talk about all that commotion that was going down around by Pepper's farm. You heard about that? Well anyway, we're shooting the mess just like always, Doctor Durell has the nicest staff.

And normally I'm the first one in there on account that I like to be the first one in and the first one out, and why not, I get up every morning 4:30, say my prayers, do my chores, in my truck by 7am to run errands. Always was an early riser, being idle is just giving the devil a sandbox to play in.

(Pause)

Oh, I'm sorry Mitchell. Well, yes, she was sitting in the waiting room by the time I got there. And like I said, there's normally no one else there the time I get there so early. And I guess I really didn't think anything of it, she was a pretty little black girl-

(Pause)

33? Yes, and I noticed her name already on the sign-in sheet Sha-quon-

(Pause)

Shanice? Yes. And I noticed her name on the sign in sheet even though I am always given the first appointment. But I wasn't gonna make anything of it. Doctor Durell knows me, and his staff is just the nicest you can ask for. So I go to sit down. Mandy tells me Doctor Durell is running a little behind, but that's ok with me. But I notice Sha-quon-

(Pause)

Shanice. I notice her kinda squirming in her chair and tapping her foot impatiently. I go about my business. I find something to read, I always bring my devotional with me, so I start reading. And things are peaceful except she keeps tapping her foot. I think to myself, I'm gonna wait a full minute before I mention something about the tapping, just to give her a chance to recognize that there are other people in the room that she might be disturbing. So there she is tapping, and there I am counting in my head, and right when I get to 58, she stands up on her heels, swings her purse over her shoulder and stomps up to the reception window. "Excuse me" she says "but I have to be to work in 40 minutes." Mandy tells her Doctor Durell is running a little behind, but that as soon as he gets in, they'll take her back right away. Well, she sucks in her teeth, and spins on her heels and stomps back to her chair, never once looking at me, like I'm not even there in the room with her. Well, I decide then and there that I'm gonna do the sensible thing. I stand up, I walk up to the reception window and I say "Mandy, I know I'm the first appointment, but please give my slot to this lovely girl so she can be to work on time. Make sure Doc Durell takes her first." And I give a little wink to Mandy. Well next thing I know, I hear this girl yelling across the waiting room, "Ma'am, I was here first, check the sign-in sheet." Well, I tell you, no good deed goes unpunished huh? What did I do wrong besides offer up my spot to her?

She takes a sip of the cold tea.

I'm sorry Mitchell. This all so disturbing to me. I mean, Lord knows I'm a work in progress, and I'm certainly a lot of things, but I would never call myself a... Well anyway, I was just trying to be helpful. I think goodness should be rewarded.

There aren't a lot of young people like her even willing to go out and get jobs, to them it pays more to sit at home and do nothing-

(Pause)

An accountant? Well her behavior was certainly unprofessional. I just wanted to acknowledge that it was nice to see young people who care about being on time for work. I couldn't tell you how many times I had to have a "talking to" to these kids when James and I used to run the farm. I didn't mean anything by it. So I start to say to her that there was no harm meant, that I'm usually the first one to be seen, but that I didn't mind her going first so she could get to work on time. Well she says "Lady, I was here first, not you. YOU don't have to do anything FOR ME." At that point I look at Mandy and we give each other a knowing glance, and I just end it right there and go and sit back down and open up my devotional. And there she goes again with the tapping of her foot, like she's just trying to make it miserable for everyone in there. I swear she's tapping her foot like the secondhand on the clock, just patronizing the staff in there like she's counting every second that Doctor Durell is not there. It gets to driving me crazy, and at first I wasn't going to say anything because clearly she was in a mood, but finally, I ask as nicely as possible and say "Dear, the tapping, is it possible-" and she shoots me the nastiest look Mitchell, I can't describe it except to say that suddenly I feared for my life, so I get up and go and stand next to the window. I say "Mandy, I don't feel comfortable in here, is there somewhere else I can sit until Doc gets here?" And Mandy tells me something about compliance and liability which I understand because I realize that there are rules that have to be followed. So I say to Mandy "well, maybe I'll just stand here and catch up with you if you don't mind." To which Mandy says of course. And I can hear that girl still just a tap, tap, tapping her foot like she wants to tap a hole in the floor! Just being ornery for no other reason than to be ornery! And at this point I'm just gritting my teeth and thinking "How many people had to suffer just so this girl could sit in the waiting room of a white doctor?! Just for her to act like this?!" And is she doing this just because she CAN?! I tell you Mitchell, all the sudden now, you can't say anything! You can't say ANYTHING to ANYBODY. Why the other day I saw a group of black boys riding through the neighborhood just raising hell, and they stopped where the crossing guard was and they circled him, and one of them puts his hand like a gun in the face of the crossing guard and says "BANG!" And they all ride off laughing! And what was I going to say? What can anyone say? This is where we are now Mitchell! We can't even treat each other with respect? Black lives matter? ALL lives matter!

She takes a sip of the cold tea.

I'm saying this exact thing to Mandy when Adam comes out and says "Doc Durell is in." And he calls Sha-niqua or Sho-quon whatever her name is to the back. And she gets up, swings her purse around, and starts stomping across the waiting room. And doesn't even stop to say thank you to me for letting her go first. And Mitchell, I can't let that go. We're all human beings. I try so hard to be a good neighbor. I did for her what I would want anyone to do for me if I needed help. And she has no manners.

And that burns me up inside! So just as she's about to walk in the back, I say to her "Your welcome." And Mitchell, the next thing I know, she's coming at me, and everything goes black except for the few stars I see. And next thing I know, I'm coming to with Doctor Durell over me, and...

She touches her bruised head.

...and here we are. I don't know what she hit me with.

She takes a sip of tea.

Mitchell, I don't recognize this world anymore. Why is it so hard for us to live together all the sudden? These kids run around protesting all the time, and your father will tell you, we all got along just fine with the blacks back in our day. Of course there were some bad apples, but I wasn't one of those people. I loved the blacks, we all got along just fine. My daddy would have never even been friends with people like the Thibodeauxs who used to ride out looking for blacks to beat up. We thought those people were trash, even worse than trash. Mitchell, I was a good person. I used to give all my old clothes and things to the poor black kids. I used to help feed them. I even taught some of them to read. And always, they had the nicest manners, would say thank you for everything. I was good Mitchell. Daddy always said to treat everyone the way you would want to be treated. And I still do that. So why did she do this? Why did this happen to ME?

(Pause)

Her side of things?

(Suddenly shocked)

Harassing her?! Mitchell...you don't believe that do you?! Certainly Mandy will tell you-

(Pause)

Really? Mandy saw that?...

(Pause)

I'm a good person Mitchell. I pray everyday for everyone, I give my time to the church, I help to feed the poor, I try to listen to hear what God wants me to understand, I...

She touches her bruise.

Oh, I'm sorry Mitchell. Yes, that's all. That's ...how it happened...

She starts to gather her things.

Go home and rest? No. I'm not that kind of person Mitchell, you know that. I have things to do. I can drive just fine. Have to go to the shelter today, I feed the homeless-

She touches her bruise again.

I mean, I feed...women and men.

I feed...women and men...

She stands.

She exits. Lights fade. End of play.