

**DRIVING MRS. DAYZEE**

**By Johanna Shapiro**

**Mrs. Dayzee**  
**Emily, daughter**  
**George, son**  
**Dr. Garden**

**Narrator:** Mrs. Dayzee is an 86 year old widow accompanied by her daughter Emily and son George on a visit to her primary care doctor, Dr. Garden.

**Dr. Garden:** Hello Mrs. Dayzee, Emily. (To George) And you are Emily's husband?

**George:** Emily's brother, George Dayzee.

**Emily:** He's just visiting. (meaningfully) He doesn't live here full-time. He lives in New York.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** (fondly) George is my baby.

**Emily:** Mom, he's almost 60 years old!

**Dr. Garden:** It's nice to meet you. I'm your mother's primary care doctor, Dr.

**Garden.** Mrs. Dayzee, weren't you in here just a few weeks ago?

**Mrs. Dayzee:** (uncertainly) I think so. Has it been that long?

**Emily:** Mom, you remember. You had a bad cold. I wanted to make sure it wasn't bronchitis.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** (helpfully, to Dr. Garden) I had a cold.

**Dr. Garden:** So how can I help you, Mrs. Dayzee?

**Mrs. Dayzee:** I don't need to be here. I feel fine today.

**George:** You're looking great, Mom!

**Emily:** (irritably) Now, mom, you know we discussed all this in the car. I'm very worried about you driving. Ever since you were diagnosed with MCI – doctor, what does that for again? Now *I* can't remember (laughs nervously).

**Dr. Garden:** Mild cognitive impairment.

**Emily:** Right. Well, mom, ever since then I just haven't felt comfortable with you behind the wheel.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** Emily, I'm just forgetful. It's natural. I'm 86.

**George:** I think your driving is great, Mom.

**Emily:** (aside) That's because you haven't seen her drive. If you think her driving is so "great," why did you tell *me* to drive over here?

**George:** (uncomfortably) Just faster.

**Dr. Garden:** Mrs. Dayzee, how are things going generally?

**Mrs. Dayzee:** Oh, fine, fine, I'm fine.

**Emily:** I've had to take over paying her bills.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** Well, the print is so small, I can't read them anymore.

**Narrator:** Emily mouths to Dr. Garden: "She's confused."

**George:** Just get her a new pair of glasses.

**Emily:** Her glasses are fine, George.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** I still do my own shopping and errands, (turning to Emily) without your help, thank you very much, missy.

**Dr. Garden:** Do *you* notice any problems driving, Mrs. Dayzee?

**Mrs. Dayzee:** Well, not really.

**Emily:** Mom, how can you say that? You've had more scrapes and fender benders than I can count.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** Emily, that old car is just hard to maneuver. It's an old boat. Yes, I did knock over Mrs. Johnson's trash can once – well, a couple of times – but you'd think I demolished her house, the fuss she made. And you see Emily, I still know how to use a word like “demolished”! (To Dr. Garden) I was an English teacher, you know.

**Dr. Garden:** I remember. I have to watch my p's and q's around you!

**Emily:** (not to be deflected) What about those dents on the driver's side? They weren't there last week.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** I bumped into a couple of posts in the parking garage. Honestly, I think they're making the stalls smaller these days!

**George:** Don't worry about it, mom, I've done exactly the same thing.

**Emily:** (pulls out her trump card) What about what happened on the freeway?

**Narrator:** Mrs. Dayzee is silent.

**Dr. Garden:** What happened, Mrs. Dayzee?

**Mrs. Dayzee:** It was just the one time.

**Dr. Garden:** (gently) Can you tell me what happened?

**Mrs. Dayzee:** I was driving on the freeway and suddenly I just didn't know where I was. I got off as fast as I could and called Emily. She made me get one of those cell phone thingies. At first I couldn't remember how to use it, but then I figured it out and she and Joe – that's her husband – came and got me.

**Emily:** I drove her home.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** It was at night, it was dark. I just got confused. I haven't driven on the freeway since then, and I won't. I can just stick to the neighborhood.

**Dr. Garden:** Mrs. Dayzee, I'm glad you've come in to talk about this; and I'm glad your children are here to support you (looks meaningfully at George). I'm concerned about you; and I'm concerned that your daughter is concerned. The people who know you best are often the ones who know when it might be time to reconsider driving.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** (anxiously) I am NOT going to stop driving! Then I'd be completely dependent on Emily to get around.

**Emily:** Mom, you know I don't mind driving you places.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** (sharply) That's not the point! I want to drive myself. (Her voice rises) *I want to drive myself!*

**Narrator:** Emily looks at Dr. Garden helplessly.

**Dr. Garden:** Mrs. Dayzee, I'm going to refer you to an occupational therapist at the hospital who can conduct a comprehensive driving evaluation. If they think you can still drive, you can enroll in an AARP safe driving class to improve your skills.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** What if I don't pass? I'm no good with tests.

**Dr. Garden:** Then I'm afraid I'm required by law to report your condition to the county health department. They'll contact the DMV, and they will revoke your license.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** (agitated) No, no. I won't be evaluated. I won't go. You can't make me.

**Emily:** Mom, please calm down.

**George:** Now look what you've done, Emily. You've upset mom.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** Dr. Garden, what if I promise not to drive on the freeway? I could only drive once a week, combine all my errands and shopping, do it all at once.

**Dr. Garden:** Mrs. Dayzee, I can see you're upset. Help me understand what's bothering you.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** (whimpering a bit) I don't want to lose my independence. I don't want to have to rely on my daughter. Next it'll be a nursing home.

**Emily:** Mom, that's not fair! You know I'll do whatever I can to keep you at home as long as possible.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** (ignores Emily) I'm losing everything. First my husband. Now driving. Next it'll be my home. (She pauses). I don't want to lose my independence.

**Dr. Garden:** It feels like you're losing everything.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** Yes, that's it. That's it.

**Dr. Garden:** Well, I don't want you to lose your independence. And neither does Emily. Or George.

**Emily:** No I don't, mom.

**George:** The doctor is right, mom.

**Dr. Garden:** But we all want you to be safe. Right, Emily? Right, George? So let's talk together about what we can do to help you keep a sense of independence, but make sure you're not at risk as a driver. Let's take first steps first. Would you be willing to go to the hospital for an evaluation?

**Mrs. Dayzee:** (defensively) I won't stay overnight.

**Dr. Garden:** You won't have to stay overnight.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** Then I'll go. (She pauses). Hmmm, we have to go on the freeway to get to that darn hospital.

**Emily:** (quickly) I'll drive you, mom.

**Mrs. Dayzee:** I think *George* should drive me. Emily needs a break, and after all, George, you're my baby!