

NOTES

Contrary to popular belief, time does not necessarily heal all wounds. Charlotte Davis and Annie Rollins were, at one time, the best of friends; however, after Charlotte leaves the Midwest to go to college on the West Coast, their friendship finds itself mimicking that of a still-life painting. After her father passes away, Charlotte returns to the Midwest and feels it is her duty to continue her father's legacy at the art museum. Annie, however, has ideas of her own. This is a realistic scene; therefore, every effort should be taken to keep the characters and dialogue as honest as possible at all times. The key to great acting is reacting. There is a lot of subtext in these lines. Don't be afraid to play around with the pain and guilt each feels after years of separation. *The Art of Preservation* is a strong one-act play for two mature actresses and may be entered in either Dramatic Interpretation, Duet Acting or Duo Interpretation.

Characters:

Charlotte Davis: Mid-late twenties. Sallow and sad looking. She is clearly in mourning, but she is filled with a determination that gives her a secret fire that sometimes shows through her misery. She is ambitious and often charismatic, although probably not today.

Annie Rollins: Mid-late-twenties. Quiet and focused, she has a passion, which makes her hard and guarded to those she thinks are against her. But she is still compassionate, feeling for other people silently, but intensely.

SCENE: A back office at a mid-sized Midwest art museum. Snow falls silently in the back. Cold. Marble. Stainless steel. It is a place that welcomes everyone momentarily. It's a Hopper painting. Noise stays at a dull hum and even the conflict we are about to see never rises to full passion.

(AT RISE: ANNIE works quietly at a desk, drinking a cup of tea and filling out paperwork. CHARLOTTE enters, wrapped and bundled against the snow. She has a mission and makes herself known immediately.)

Charlotte: Excuse me? Annie?

Annie: Charlotte!

Charlotte: May I come in?

Annie: Yes, of course, please.

Charlotte: Thank you.

Annie: Won't you have a seat, please?

Charlotte: No, I would prefer to stand, thank you.

Annie: Alright. How are you? It's... good to see you.

Charlotte: I'm fine.

Annie: Are you, though?

Charlotte: I really don't want to talk about it. Not right now. I mean, thank you. But really. I'm fine.

Annie: Alright. I'm sorry. I just want you to know, if there is anything I can do... Anything at all...

Charlotte: I know. I know. And I appreciate that. I do. Actually, um...I've come to discuss something with you.

Annie: Okay. Um... Can I get you coffee? Or tea?

Charlotte: No. I don't need coffee.

Annie: It's really no problem.

Charlotte: Annie, I'm really fine.

Annie: Sorry, Char...

(Short silence. They both wait. CHARLOTTE takes control)

Charlotte: Look, this is hard for me. I'm just going to say what I came here to say and that will be that. And then we can go back to the way things were before.

Annie: Fine. I mean, if that's what you want.

Charlotte: I want you to convince the board to give me my father's job. To make me his predecessor.

Annie: Ah.

Charlotte: I saw that you've opened the position up to the public, and I am sure you have other candidates that you are considering. I am willing to go through whatever formalities you think are necessary to save face or whatever, but I need you to tell them that I am the best person for the position. You have a lot of sway. A lot of influence. They trust you, and I need your help. You know how hard it is for me to admit that to you.

Annie: I see.

Charlotte: You and I both know that I know everything my father knows and more. I am more than capable of running this gallery. I know the ins and outs, the contacts, I just... I know it. Okay? I do. I can do this job. And I can do it better than anyone else can. You know I can.

Annie: Yes. Well, thank you for coming in. I will take that into consideration.

(This is met with uncomfortable silence from both of them)

Charlotte: What?

Annie: Did you need something else?

Charlotte: I... no... I just need... this.

Annie: Well, then.

Charlotte: You're taking it into consideration?

Annie: Charlotte, there's nothing more I can do.

Charlotte: Yes, there is.

Annie: The board is looking at a few people. You're right about that. And you're also right that you are certainly qualified. But I don't think I can just