

GENERATIONS

by Ken Bradbury



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(Grammy sits in a chair at C. Another chair is beside her. The old lady is lightly dozing.)

[A note to the actors: please don't overplay these two ladies ... they're very real. No stereotyping allowed.]

MELINDA: *(entering)* She's asleep. Maybe I'll just leave. No, I'll get in trouble. Mom said to come sit with her this afternoon. Man, when I think of all the things I could be doing. Didn't even bring anything to read. *(She looks at Grammy again ... carefully sits in the chair beside her. She studies her sleeping grandmother for a moment, then)* I can't even see her breathing. I wonder if I should ... Surely she's okay or somebody would have noticed. *(a long pause, then)* This is spooky. *(gets up, looks around)* How can anybody stay in a place like this? Nothing but old people. Old magazines. Old furniture. Old people. I couldn't stand it. I'd go nuts.

GRAMMY: Maybe I have.

MELINDA: Grammy! You're awake! *(moves to sit beside her)* I thought ... well, I'm just glad you're okay.

GRAMMY: It makes the time go faster. Do you ever want that? You want the time to go faster?

MELINDA: Sometimes I guess.

GRAMMY: Wait 'til you get in place like this. Three excitements a day ... breakfast, lunch and dinner ... oh, and going to the bathroom. I guess that's pretty thrilling.

MELINDA: You're funny, Grammy.

GRAMMY: Yeah. A real card. So ... you've got guard duty today?

MELINDA: It's not like that, Grammy.

GRAMMY: Yes it is. You hate it here.

MELINDA: I don't hate it.

GRAMMY: It's not nice to lie.

MELINDA: I'm not ... well, I mean it's not the greatest place in the world.

GRAMMY: It's a used car lot ... except nobody needs a ride. Could you hand me that cup?

MELINDA: Sure. (*gives Grammy her cup*)

GRAMMY: (*begins to drink, stops and looks in the cup*)
Who put their teeth in my cup?

MELINDA: Oh! Grammy!

GRAMMY: I'm kidding. Just wanted to give you a taste of what excitement means around "the home." Look Melinda, if you have someplace you want to go, go ahead. I won't tell on you. Lord knows if I were your age I wouldn't want to spend a Saturday afternoon in one of these places.

MELINDA: No, Grammy. I want to be right here with you.

GRAMMY: (*a pause then*) You know, your mother always crinkles her eyebrows when she lies, too.

MELINDA: Grammy, I really don't mind being here. I really don't. I mean, I don't mind being with you.

GRAMMY: Am I boring?

MELINDA: No!

GRAMMY: Then you've got a pretty dull life. I think I'm boring. Look at this, Melinda. This is my world. A 12 by 15 foot universe. I can't go anywhere without help. I can barely feed myself, and I can't stay awake through an entire weather report. By the time I wake up, the weather's changed anyway. I sound pretty boring to me.

MELINDA: Grammy, you're not boring. Really you're not. (*helping her lift her cup*) Here, have a drink of water. (*as Grammy drinks, Melinda rises and speaks to the audience*) She's right. And she's smart. She knows I'm faking it. I hate this place. And I hate her being in this place ... like ... like this. (*returns to her chair and takes her Grandmother's cup*) That better?

GRAMMY: Better than what? How can water be better than anything? Got anything stronger?

MELINDA: Grammy! You don't drink!

GRAMMY: I meant Pepto-Bismol. So ... let's make some meaningless conversation. How's school?

MELINDA: Fine.

GRAMMY: (*a pause, then*) Well, I guess we exhausted that subject.

MELINDA: I'm sorry. I'm doing real well this year. Honor roll.

GRAMMY: That's as boring as water.

MELINDA: Grammy!

GRAMMY: I don't mean the grades. Of course you're smart. You're my granddaughter. I mean talking about school is pretty boring. The ladies down at Bingo? That's all they do ... talk about their grandchildren's grades. And most of 'em lie.

MELINDA: You're funny.

GRAMMY: No. I'm just old. Old is not funny. Not knowing you're old ... now that's funny. You see the outfits some of these gals around here wear? Their bodies gave up forty years ago but nobody told their clothes. That's funny. Is there a pillow back there someplace? I think I've been sitting in this same spot since September. (*Melinda turns to search for a pillow as Grammy rises, very much like a young girl, and addresses the audience.*) She should have seen me back when I was her age. That would have been nice. (*She turns to look at Melinda who's still searching for the pillow.*) We'd have been good friends. So much alike ... except I could have outrun her. (*She sits back in her chair and once again becomes the frail, older lady as Melinda turns with a pillow.*)

MELINDA: Here, Grammy. Is this the one?

GRAMMY: Yep. Your great-grandma made that pillow. See where she stitched her name in the corner?

MELINDA: (*looking at the pillow*) Neat.

GRAMMY: Why don't you take it? I've got enough pillows and I wanted you to have it some day.

MELINDA: Oh, I couldn't.

GRAMMY: Sure you could. Put it in your backpack right now. Let's keep it in the family.

MELINDA: Are you sure?

GRAMMY: Come on, sweetheart. It's the only decision I've made all week. Let me enjoy it. (*Melinda turns to put the pillow away as Granny rises, again as a young girl, to address the audience*) She doesn't want the pillow. What does a teenage



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