

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR GRANDPA

A Farce by Michal Jacot

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR GRANDPA is dedicated to Barb Hunter, who always laughs at my stories of Old Al, no matter how many times she hears them.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR GRANDPA was first performed at Arenac Eastern High School, in Twining, Michigan, on December 2 & 3, 1994, under the direction of Barbara Hunter and Mike Flore. The cast was as follows:

Frankie	Jennifer Gingerich
Keith	James Kittner
Amber	Yvette St. Pierre / Denise Parkhurst
Grandpa	Ed Laclair
Mr. Skaminski	Andy Anderson
Mrs. Kelly	Heidi Cobb
Det. Nick Macy	James Caughel
Police Officer	Angela Teachout
Police Officer	Myron Stutzman

STORY OF THE PLAY

A cantankerous grandfather, ill-tempered and paranoid, is determined to think that his grandkids, three young adults, are trying to kill him for their inheritance (\$642 and a postcard collection). Grandpa doesn't mind shouting it down the halls of the apartment building to alert whatever neighbors he can. So when Grandpa suddenly slumps forward, face down in the birthday cake at his surprise party, the grandkids realize it looks like murder and they are the suspects.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 M, 3 W, 2 Flexible)

FRANCINE “FRANKIE” HARTLEY: The youngest of 3 siblings, in her early twenties. The ‘jock’ type.

KEITH HARTLEY: The oldest of the 3, late twenties. Pessimistic.

AMBER HARTLEY: The middle of the 3, mid-twenties. Nice enough, but can be a bit spacey.

WALTER “GRANDPA” HARTLEY: The grandfather of Frankie, Keith and Amber. A crusty, crabby, sour, bad-tempered man of 96.

ABNER SKAMINSKI: Grandpa’s best friend, 78 years old, and the opposite of Grandpa. An old man who appreciates a good joke and a smile.

MRS. KELLY: An elderly neighbor.

DETECTIVE NICK MACY: One of New York’s finest, if you don’t count every other detective in the city. Fancies himself as tough, but is something of a bumbler.

TWO POLICE OFFICERS: Called to assist Detective Macy.

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SETTING

An average apartment living room, decorated simply but tastefully. DSR is the front door; there is an armchair up next to it. In the USR area there is what will be referred to as the kitchen archway that leads to an imaginary kitchen. On the USL wall is the bedroom archway; the actors will be able to step out into this archway, then turn SL or SR to exit. DSL is a sofa, and in the CS is a table with four chairs around it (two on the UPS side and one on either end). The table is decorated for a birthday celebration, with gifts and a pile of cards.

PROPS

FRANKIE- grocery bag, w/ cups, napkins etc, baseball bat, pills, Partridge family album

AMBER- cake, coffee cup, plates, ice cream

KEITH- pen, ice cubes in cloth, sunglasses

GRANDPA- cane

MRS KELLY- cassarole dish

DETECTIVE- wallet w/badge and notebook

SET PROPS-stack of cards, presents, knife, candles

SOUND EFFECTS

Loud crash offstage, Another crash, Doorbell rings

ACT I

(AT RISE: An apartment in New York City in the summer. FRANCINE HARTLEY, AKA "FRANKIE," enters from the front door carrying a grocery bag. She was probably a tomboy when she was younger and is still a sports nut. She wears a baseball cap backwards and a baseball jersey. She is also carrying a baseball bat that she props up against the wall out of the way. She is humming "Happy Birthday To You" under her breath, probably not even realizing she's doing it. She takes Styrofoam cups, napkins and such from the bag and puts the items on the table. She rifles through the stack of birthday cards until she finds one in particular. She holds it up proudly.)

FRANKIE: *(Reading envelope)* 'To Grandpa. With love, from Frankie.' *(SHE smiles, then makes a point of putting her card on the top of the pile. She walks toward the kitchen. As she does, AMBER HARTLEY enters from kitchen archway carrying a chocolate birthday cake.)* Hey, sis.

AMBER: Hi, Frankie. How did your game go?

FRANKIE: Great. We dusted 'em eighteen to two. I made a double-play unassisted.

AMBER: Great!

FRANKIE: Well, not so great. The guy I tagged out was going to take me out tonight. I think he got kind of mad at me.

AMBER: Uh-oh, better watch that male ego bruising or you'll never get a boyfriend.

FRANKIE: Hey, I could never be serious about a guy who can't play baseball better than me.

AMBER: Did you get everything?

FRANKIE: Everything but the candles for the cake.

AMBER: They didn't have birthday candles? You're kidding!

FRANKIE: No, they didn't have enough birthday candles. They only come ten to a pack, and the store only had nine packs in stock.

AMBER: I guess it's just as well. We don't want to risk setting off the smoke alarm.

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FRANKIE: I could run to the hardware and pick up a couple of flares.

AMBER: Very funny. We'll use what we've got. *(FRANKIE exits into kitchen. AMBER sets cake on table, humming "Happy Birthday." She looks through cards, smiling, then picks one out and reads it aloud.)* "To the best grandfather in the world. Love, Amber." *(SHE puts the card back in the pile, then puts it on top of the pile.)*

(KEITH HARTLEY enters from bedroom archway. HE is a sullen, somewhat pessimistic fellow.)

AMBER: *(Singing)* Hellooooo, Keith!

KEITH: *(Grunts)* Coffee.

AMBER: There's some made. I'll get a cup for you. *(SHE exits into kitchen. KEITH looks longingly at the cake. He starts to reach for it.)* And don't touch that cake! *(KEITH backs away, then looks at the cake again. After a cautious glance toward the kitchen, he reaches for it again.)* I mean it!!

(KEITH gives up. He looks through the cards on the table, then chooses the same one FRANKIE chose before. He reads it aloud.)

KEITH: "To Grandpa, with love, Frankie." *(Taking a pen, HE scribbles out the name and writes in) "To Grandpa, with love...Keith." (HE buries the card in the pile and sits on the couch. AMBER enters with a cup of coffee.)*

AMBER: Another rough night?

KEITH: You bet, Amberger.

AMBER: Must you call me "Amberger"? You know I hate that.

KEITH: You're my little sister. I have to do things that irritate you. I think it's a law.

AMBER: Did you get Grandpa a card?

KEITH: In a manner of speaking.

AMBER: Did you get him a gift?

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KEITH: Yes, I got Grandpa a gift. I got him something useful and tasteful that he'll absolutely hate.

AMBER: Oh, give him a little credit, Keith.

KEITH: Look, I know Grandpa and his temper. He won't like my gift. He won't like your gift. He won't like any gift he gets, but he'll keep them all. And he'll hate this party. You've got to wonder if Grandpa will appreciate the fuss you're making. No, I guess you don't have to wonder. I already know the answer, and it's "no."

AMBER: Now, Keith

KEITH: Think about it. Has he ever appreciated anything we've done for him? When Grandma died, he refused to move out of New York. Mom and Dad told him they would let him live in Burbank with them, but he wouldn't give that a second thought.

AMBER: Grandpa sure didn't want anything to do with California, did he? He calls it the Granola State. Full of fruits, nuts, and flakes.

KEITH: So, what do we, the loving grandchildren, do? You move him into your apartment. You take care of him, cook his meals. Francine takes the apartment across the hall and comes over to help with expenses and such.

AMBER: Don't call her Francine. She hates that. (*KEITH shrugs.*) Oh, yes, I forgot. The Irritate The Little Sisters Law.

KEITH: You two do everything you can to make his life more tolerable.

AMBER: And you move into the spare bedroom because you're out of work and need a place to crash.

KEITH: Hey, the point is, we really set Grandpa up real nice here, and he has never said, "Thank you."

AMBER: Sure he has, lots of times. A few times. Every so often. Once or twice.

KEITH: Really? Name a time he said, "Thank you." For anything.

AMBER: Okay, last month. When I went grocery shopping, I bought him those little cookies he likes so much.

KEITH: He didn't say "Thank you." He said, "You couldn't have given up three cents and gone for the better brand?"

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