

VODKA SODA
A Drama

by Rae Mansfield and Linda Lau

Cast of Characters

AUDRE: 30s, female
GRANDMA: 80s, female, Audre's Grandma
STEPHANIE: 80s, female, Grandma's roommate

Time
Present

Place
A hospital room

Scene 1

At Rise: GRANDMA is sitting in bed reading a book. There are flowers on her night stand, framed photos of family members, colorful scarves and throws on the furniture, and other personalized items. STEPHANIE is on the other side of the curtain. Her nightstand is empty save for a pitcher, a cup of water, and a magnifying glass. She is staring at the ceiling. STEPHANIE picks up the remote, turns the TV on, flips through channels, turns the TV off, sighs audibly, and resumes staring at the ceiling. The door is located on STEPHANIE's side. AUDRE enters, carrying a tote bag.

STEPHANIE

Another visitor?

(AUDRE stops.)

STEPHANIE

Why are you here? She doesn't need any more visitors.

AUDRE

Hello to you, too.

STEPHANIE

This isn't a bus station. And you're not her daughter. You're too young.

AUDRE

I'm her granddaughter. I'm Audre.

STEPHANIE

She's already had six other people come today. If you're looking to get on her will, get in line.

AUDRE

Oh...um...I'm not --

(STEPHANIE laughs.)

STEPHANIE

You're wasting your time, honey. And you're bothering me. I'd suggest you go away.

AUDRE

I'm sorry.

(AUDRE walks over to the other side of the curtain.)

STEPHANIE (yells)

Your granddaughter doesn't know how to follow directions. Respect your elders, missy!

GRANDMA

It's okay. Don't mind her. She's on statins. They make her grumpy.

STEPHANIE

I heard you talking about me!

GRANDMA

It's alright. Just ignore her.

(AUDRE reaches over and gives GRANDMA a hug.)

AUDRE

How are you doing?

GRANDMA

Not so well, but I'll manage. I'm glad you came.

AUDRE

I brought you something.

(AUDRE removes a pastry box from the bag.)

GRANDMA

Is it chocolate almond bark?

AUDRE

Yup. From Sandy's.

STEPHANIE (yells)

Did you bring *me* any chocolate almond bark?

(AUDRE looks at her GRANDMA and then at the box.)

GRANDMA (to AUDRE)

It's alright. We can share.

(AUDRE puts a piece on a napkin and walks over to STEPHANIE.)

STEPHANIE

Humph. I need something to drink.

(AUDRE looks at her. STEPHANIE gestures at the pitcher. AUDRE obediently pours a glass of water and hands it to STEPHANIE. AUDRE stands there for a moment.)

STEPHANIE

Well, what are you standing there for? Go back to your Grandma.

(AUDRE awkwardly walks backward to GRANDMA.)

GRANDMA

How is everything going with Celine? Did she get the job?

AUDRE

She's going to teach her first semester at NYU this fall.

GRANDMA

That's wonderful. I'm so happy for her. It's good to have good news.

AUDRE

And we're moving into a new apartment. She proposed to me!

STEPHANIE (shouts)

You're a *lesbian*?!?

AUDRE (shouts)

YES!

GRANDMA

(to STEPHANIE)

It takes all kinds. Don't be so shocked. They're very nice girls.

AUDRE

We're not sure when we'll get married, but it'll probably be in the next few weeks. I'll let you know when I find out.

STEPHANIE

How do you decide who's gonna wear the dress and who wears the tux?

GRANDMA

You don't have to answer her. Hey, Stephanie. Can we have some privacy? I'll trade you a nip of gin for that.

(GRANDMA unzips her toiletry bag and takes out a tiny bottle of gin.)

STEPHANIE

Fine. I like vodka better, but if that's all you got.

(AUDRE takes the gin bottle, gives it to STEPHANIE. STEPHANIE puts on ear plugs and turns on the TV with closed captioning. AUDRE walks back to GRANDMA.)

GRANDMA

So tell me all about it. How did the proposal happen?

AUDRE

It wasn't really very exciting. She just asked me. We've talked about getting married before.

GRANDMA

Did she at least get you a ring?

AUDRE

I didn't want one.

GRANDMA

You need a ring.

(GRANDMA takes off the ring from her own finger and hands it to AUDRE. AUDRE refuses.)

AUDRE

I don't need one. And I can't take yours.

GRANDMA

You have to have a ring! Take it. I insist.

AUDRE

I'm fine, Grandma. Really.

GRANDMA

It's not like I need to keep suitors from knocking down my door. I don't need to show I'm taken anymore. Please.

(AUDRE takes the ring.)

AUDRE

Okay. If you really want me to have it.

GRANDMA

I do. Put it on!

(AUDRE puts the ring on.)

GRANDMA

There! Now you look engaged!

(AUDRE holds out her hand and looks at the ring.)

AUDRE

Thank you, Grandma.

(They both smile. Fade out.)

Scene 2

At Rise: GRANDMA is lying in bed. She is reading, but her eyes get tired and she puts the book down. She takes a few big breaths. STEPHANIE is staring at the ceiling. AUDRE enters. She is carrying a photograph album and a tote bag. She stops at STEPHANIE's bed first.

AUDRE

Good morning, Stephanie. How are you today?

STEPHANIE

Terrible!

AUDRE

I'm sorry to hear that.

STEPHANIE

But as my doctor says, "Something else'll probably kill ya."

(AUDRE takes out an *Us Weekly*.)

STEPHANIE

Why didn't you get the *National Enquirer*?

(AUDRE takes out a bag of pretzels and gives them to STEPHANIE.)

STEPHANIE

Fine. But I still don't like you. And keep it quiet over there. I need to rest.

(AUDRE takes out a tiny bottle of vodka and a bottle of soda. STEPHANIE takes the bottles and pours them into the cup on the nightstand, then starts flipping through the *Us Weekly* while drinking her vodka soda. AUDRE walks over GRANDMA.)

AUDRE

Hi, Grandma.

GRANDMA

You just missed your sister by an hour. She came with your Mom.

AUDRE

Did Dad come?

GRANDMA

No, but he's busy.

AUDRE

Of course he's "busy"

STEPHANIE

That sounds just like a man.

AUDRE

Are you comfortable?

GRANDMA

I'm fine. No need to fuss over me. Now show me what you brought with you.

AUDRE

Oh, I almost forgot. I found this in Grandpa's old stuff. I thought you might want to see it.

(AUDRE gives GRANDMA the photo album.)

GRANDMA

Know what's in there?

AUDRE

I took a quick glance, but I wanted to wait to see it with you.

(GRANDMA starts flipping through the pages.)

GRANDMA

Your mother's sisters were so fat.

AUDRE

Grandma!

GRANDMA

What? I'm just stating a fact. It's not an opinion.

AUDRE

Look at that! You must've just gotten married to Grandpa here.

GRANDMA

I loved that dress. I went out dancing with your grandfather and a man told him, "There are a lot of pretty girls here, but none as beautiful as your wife."

AUDRE

I didn't know grandpa could dance.

GRANDMA

He was a secret dancer. Only showed off when we were at home. Said he didn't want to attract attention when we were out.

AUDRE

Seriously?

GRANDMA

Yes. You should've seen him. Cha cha, merengue, rumba. I think he could've been a professional dancer if he studied it. Had the natural talent for it, but he didn't think it was right to pursue an artistic career when he had a family to support. It wasn't something a sensible man would do in those days.

STEPHANIE (shouts)

Or any day! Maybe he just wasn't brave enough to try. You have a weird family, Patty. Never met a man who was a dancer or such a boring lesbian. I bet your granddaughter can't even change a tire or open jars for herself.

GRANDMA (smiles)

She's just jealous.

(AUDRE and GRANDMA continue looking at the album.)

AUDRE

Who's this?

GRANDMA

That's my mom.

AUDRE

She doesn't really look like you.

GRANDMA

That's because I was adopted.

AUDRE

What?! How come we never knew?

GRANDMA

We didn't talk about things like that back then. If a girl got pregnant, they hid her away until she had the baby.

AUDRE

What else don't I know?

GRANDMA

Well, I always *wished* your Dad was adopted. Then I could blame his horrible personality on his biological parents.

(GRANDMA laughs. AUDRE starts laughing too. Fade out)

Scene 3

At Rise: GRANDMA is lying in bed. She looks very ill. STEPHANIE is rifling through the *Us Weekly* magazine. She goes back to looking at the ceiling. AUDRE enters carrying a tote bag.

AUDRE

Hi Stephanie. How are you today?

STEPHANIE

Why do you keep asking me that? You don't want the honest answer.

(AUDRE takes out a *National Enquirer* and a small box of chocolates. STEPHANIE takes the items and starts eating the chocolates, nibbling off the corners to see the fillings.)

STEPHANIE (whispering)

She's in a mood today.

(AUDRE walks over to GRANDMA.)

AUDRE

Hi, Grandma.

GRANDMA

Go away.

AUDRE

It's me, Grandma. It's Audre.

GRANDMA

I don't want to talk right now.

AUDRE

We don't have to talk. I'll just sit here.

GRANDMA

I look terrible. I haven't even put on my lipstick.

AUDRE

It's alright. I don't mind.

GRANDMA

I think you should stop coming.

I don't mind.

AUDRE

I need you to stop coming.

GRANDMA

But I...

AUDRE

It's not your choice.

GRANDMA

(AUDRE looks very uneasy.)

Go away, please.

GRANDMA

But...

AUDRE

I mean it! Go! Get out!

GRANDMA

Grandma...please...

AUDRE

(GRANDMA ignores her and closes her eyes. AUDRE sits there not knowing what to do. She tidies up the room and GRANDMA is still ignoring her. She tries to go up to GRANDMA and GRANDMA turns away. AUDRE stands there for another moment. Then she starts walking away. She reaches STEPHANIE's bed.)

STEPHANIE

She's only being mean because she loves you.

(AUDRE starts to cry, silently. STEPHANIE takes AUDRE's hands and holds them for a moment. AUDRE exits.)

THE END