

SMD

a short play
by Ruth Zamoyta

CAST OF CHARACTERS

GRANDPA MURGY	Around 80
SID	GRANDPA MURGY's 18 year-old grandson

TIME/PLACE

Early 21c, college dorm. There's a bed and a picture hook above the bed.

The Scene

AT RISE: SID is unpacking stuff in his dorm room. GRANDPA enters, holding an oversize shopping bag with something in it.

Hey Murgy ol' boy. GRANDPA

Hi Grandpa. Could you call me Sid, please? SID

Why? GRANDPA

This is college. I mean, I'm starting a new life. I'd really like to be called Sid from now on. SID

Not even "Sil?" That's closer to Silvester. GRANDPA

"Sil" sounds like a girl. Like Silvia. SID

My father went by Sil. GRANDPA

It was different back then. SID

And he was a pretty masculine guy, at first. A naval commander. Shot down a German battleship. It was a pivotal moment in the war. GRANDPA

Didn't he turn out to be gay? SID

Yeah, it gave my mother a good laugh when he came out of the closet. GRANDPA

How old were you? SID

GRANDPA

About eight. But, I'd already found his female clothes in a box in the basement, so I wasn't surprised. At least he stayed involved with the family and let me dress up from time to time.

SID

Well, I like the way "Sid" sounds. It has...an authoritative ring to it. Like, Sid Vicious.

GRANDPA

And Cyd Charisse.

SID

Who's that?

GRANDPA

Never mind. Hey. Do I have to call you that at family gatherings?

SID

What?

GRANDPA

"Sid?"

SID

Yes. Please.

GRANDPA

No more Murgy?

SID

I'd really appreciate it, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

What happened to "Grandpa *Murgy*?" I mean, I didn't ask you to change my name.

SID

OK. Grandpa *Murgy*.

GRANDPA

You know, we come from a long line of Silvester Murgatroyds.

SID

(with him)

long line of Silvester Murgatroyds. I respect that, Grandpa, but the name just doesn't work in the twenty-first century.

GRANDPA

So, you're not going to name your son Silvester Murgatroyd?

SID

I'm only 18. I'm not there, yet, Grampa.

GRANDPA

You got a girl, right?

SID

Yeah, but she's 18, too. It's going to be, like, ten years before I have a son. Probably 20.

GRANDPA

Are you going to name him Silvester Murgatroyd Danforth the Sixth when he's born 20 years from now? I mean, I might not be around.

SID

Probably not.

GRANDPA

Well, this might help it sink in a little, while you're sleeping.

(GRANDPA pulls from his bag a framed cross-stitch with the large letters "SMD." He puts it on the picture hook above the bed.)

SID

Oh my God.

GRANDPA

I know. The moment you've been waiting for, for 18 years. I'm officially handing down the family heirloom. That's why I wanted to meet you here alone, just me and you.

SID

Why didn't you give it to dad?

GRANDPA

It skips generations. It's the work of my grandmother Betsy Danforth, wife of Silvester Murgatroyd Danforth the First. And, he gave it to me in 1950 ...

(looks out the window)

right across the quad there, when I was 18 and moved into McClellan Hall.

SID

Grandpa Murgy? I don't know how to tell you this. I mean, I really appreciate it. It's totally lit. I mean ... the family heirloom! Wow. But, I can't hang this over my bed. Or even on any wall.

GRANDPA

It's valuable to me and you. But really, Murg—I mean Sid—if any thieves get in here, they'll think it's junk from a yard sale.

SID

No. You don't get it. "SMD" means something.

GRANDPA

Of course. Silvester Murgatroyd Danforth.

SID

No, I mean, in the streets. It's like, an acronym for something.

GRANDPA

Oh yeah, I saw that in a magazine in the doctor's office. Senile Macular Degeneration.

SID

No. Worse.

(SID whispers in GRANDPA's ear.)

GRANDPA

Oh. Well. What's wrong with that? It's a nice activity to think about.

SID

What?!

GRANDPA

I mean, if your girlfriend came to visit, it might give her some ideas.

SID

Oh my God. Grandpa. No.

GRANDPA

A little fellatio now and then is healthy for a young man.

SID

My girlfriend would probably break up with me if she saw that.

GRANDPA

In fact, your grandmother had a very interesting technique.

SID

(puts his hands over his ears)

TMI, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Murphy—I mean, Sid—you shouldn't be ashamed of natural bodily desires.

SID

What will my roommate say?

GRANDPA

You can tell him this is not a directive for him. You're not that kind of guy.

SID

He's going to hate me from day one.

GRANDPA

That all depends on you, Sid.

SID

No. He's going to get here tomorrow and see that and start laughing at me.

GRANDPA

So, then you say, "What are you laughing at?" Here. Let's do a little role play.

SID

That's disgusting, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Not that kind of role play, wise guy. Here. I'll be you and you be your roommate, OK?

SID

I can handle it.

GRANDPA

C'mon. Indulge me.

SID

All right.

GRANDPA

So, your roommate starts laughing and you say, "What are you laughing at?"

SID

"Dude. SMD? Really?"

GRANDPA

"Dude. That's a reminder for my girlfriend."

(SID cracks up.)

GRANDPA (Cont.)

See? That's how you break the ice. With a little humor. And savoir faire.

SID

What if he's laughing at me, not with me?

GRANDPA

Then you say, "My great-great grandmother made that."

SID

"As a reminder for your girlfriend?"

GRANDPA

"As a reminder to my great-great grandfather about their favorite thing to do in bed."

SID

"That's sick."

GRANDPA

"That's not sick—it's perfectly healthy and natural."

SID

"Sick" means good, Grandpa. It means cool.

GRANDPA

That's odd. But, you see, you're marking your territory from the start. You can tell your roommate he can borrow it for when his girlfriend comes over.

SID

He doesn't have a girlfriend. He's gay.

GRANDPA

Even better.

SID

And, he doesn't have a boyfriend at the moment. They broke up after graduation. He's taking it kinda hard.

GRANDPA

Then he needs you, Sid. He's leaving home and coming to college for the first time, with a broken heart. Tell him you'll help him find a new boyfriend. A real hottie. Then he can borrow grandma's picture.

SID

What if he thinks that's really what it stands for?

GRANDPA

When he sees your name somewhere he'll figure it out. They don't let dumb-dumbs into this school, you know.

SID

Oh great. Then everyone will call me SMD.

GRANDPA

Sid. You should be proud of your name. You come from a long line of amazing SMD's. Do you know that a portrait of your great-great grandfather Silvester Murgatroyd Danforth the First is hanging in the Commons?

SID

What?! In the Commons? Like, with the portraits of all those famous dead alumni?

GRANDPA

Yeah. He's between William Howard Taft and James Fenimore Cooper. My grandfather was a great man. Gave thousands of people work during the Panic of 1893 by leasing farmland to the unemployed for a penny an acre.

SID

Dope.

GRANDPA

He was no dope. When the economy picked up, he let them stay and cultivate these new things called soybeans. That's where the family fortune came from.

SID

Dope means awesome, Grandpa Murgy.

GRANDPA

And you know there's an epidemiology lab in the med school named after your father, Silvester Murgatroyd Danforth the Fourth. When he died fighting the virus in China, they had a little ceremony at the med school. You were two. Do you remember that?

SID

Not really.

GRANDPA

It was your first time on campus.

SID

Mom told me about it when I was looking at colleges. It actually convinced me to make this my first choice.

GRANDPA

You know, Sid, when you're proud and confident of your name, people will respect that. You see, it already worked.

SID

What?

GRANDPA

You told me when I got in here, "Grandpa. Call me Sid." You were confident about that, so I respected that, and, you see, I call you Sid now.

SID

Yeah, I guess you're right.

GRANDPA

Of course I'm right. I just wish I'd done something as remarkable as my father and my grandfather, and your father, and what you're going to do in the future, with your invention.

SID

You mean the app that lets you make donations to homeless shelters?

GRANDPA

Yeah. You're going to be just as remarkable as your forefathers.

SID

Grandpa, you're just a great guy, and that's pretty remarkable.

GRANDPA

Well, that's kind of you to say, kiddo. So, you feeling better about your name, Silvester Murgatroyd Danforth the Fifth?

SID

Yes, Grandpa Murgy.

GRANDPA

Good. Because I got you this.

(GRANDPA pulls out from bag a T-Shirt with "SMD" across the front. SID cracks up.)

GRANDPA

You going to wear it to orientation?

SID

(puts it on)

I'll wear it with pride, Grandpa Murgy.

GRANDPA

(opens his jacket to reveal an identical shirt)

I got one for me, too. For the gals at Friday morning BINGO. Maybe I'll get lucky.

SID

Dope.

GRANDPA

Yeah. Sick.

(BLACKOUT)

End of Play