SMD

a short play
by Ruth Zamoyta

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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

SID

Hi Grandpa. Could you call me Sid, please?

Why?

GRANDPA

SID

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

GRANDPA

Not even “Sil?” That’s closer to Silvester.

SID

“Sil” sounds like a girl. Like Silvia.

GRANDPA

My father went by Sil.

SID

It was different back then.

GRANDPA

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.

SID

Didn’t he turn out to be gay?

GRANDPA

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

SID

How old were you?
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?

“Sid?”

GRANDPA
Yes. Please.

SID
No more Murgy?

GRANDPA
I’d really appreciate it, Grandpa.

SID
What happened to “Grandpa Murgy?” I mean, I didn’t ask you to change my name.

GRANDPA
OK. Grandpa Murgy.

SID (with him)
You know, we come from a 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
Murgy—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*