

The Garage Sale of Amazing Items

A play by Chris McKerracher

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Setting:

The story takes place in the modern era. The stage has tables set up on either side piled with garage sale items. The play begins with an older woman, Nan, walking up to the garage. She is wearing very old fashioned clothing.

Cast:

Nan: An extremely sweet, elderly woman in vintage clothing.

Keith: Rough-hewn. Desperate.

Sally: A young university student

Tessa: Middle-aged woman. Preoccupied.

Peg: Suburban housewife wanting more from her marriage

Gary: Peg's husband trying to do better

Nan: Oh my, yes. This is perfect. **(She goes about the table looking at various items.)** Garage sales are such a nice way to meet people... All this... this stuff... so expensive when it was new... The important part is putting the right thing into the right person's hand at just the right time. I know. I'm an old hand at garage sales.

(Keith enters. He appears nervous and unsure.)

Nan: Well hello! Thanks for stopping by. My name is Nan. Please look around. I'm sure there's something here that's perfect for you!

Keith: Yeah, well, I doubt it. This is a bit of a Hail Mary pass in the final seconds before the buzzer, if you know what I mean.

Nan: Oh my goodness! A Hail Mary? So you are on some kind of religious mission... Mister... errr... uh... I'm sorry, I didn't get your name.

Keith: I didn't give it. Look I really doubt you have what I'm looking for, lady.

Nan: I see. So you stopped in because you were certain what you are looking for isn't here. You have an interesting decision-making process, Keith.

Keith: Look, I don't actually know why I stopped in, frankly and.. hey wait, how did you know my name?

Nan: Are you sure you didn't tell me? It's not important now. What's important is to help you. You seem somewhat discombobulated. Did you get enough sleep last night? It is very important, you know. Is your tongue coated, dear? Have you pooped today?

Keith: All right! All right! I'll talk! I just need a gift for my old lady for her birthday and I waited too long to buy it. Now I'll be in the doghouse if I just pick up some knickknack from the pharmacy on the corner.

Nan: Maybe there is something here she would like. Why don't you tell me about her? I am sure I can find just the right thing. I do know one thing about her, though.

Keith: Really? What's that?

Nan: She hates it when you call her your old lady. Whenever you have the urge to call her that, say "sweetie" instead.

Keith: Why should I do that?

Nan: Because it would make her feel better about herself. I know you wouldn't call her your old lady unless you really loved her and would stick by her through thick and thin.

Keith: Well, most of the time. You know how it is. We always love each other but don't always like each other.

Nan: So do this little "sweetie" thing for her. It doesn't cost you a penny and works better than roses for making her happy. You want her to be happy don't you?

Keith: Well of course I do. More than anything. But she can be kind of cold. You know what I mean? It's like we're in some kind of cycle where things are fine but then maybe there's a joke that sounds more like an insult happens and the fight is on.

Nan: I know a story about a man...

Keith: Look, lady, I don't really have time for stories.

Nan: The man and his wife always bickered. They couldn't agree on anything and would do mean things to one another to get even for the mean things the other did. The man thought she did it on purpose to avoid... closeness.

Keith: How did you know about...

Nan: This story isn't actually about you, Keith. Anyway, the man, let's call him, ummm... Kevin. This... Kevin... he decided he was going to... kill his wife.

Keith: What? Wait a minute lady...

Nan: He didn't want to be suspected so he began doting on his wife. He always made sure he called her sweetie in both public and private. Kevin also would hold her hand when they were out walking together and often bought her little inexpensive surprise gifts. He kept it up until his wife began bragging to her friends about what a model husband he had become.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah. Like an alibi almost... Fiendishly clever. So? Did it work?

Nan: Yes and no. His wife was so appreciative of Kevin's change of behaviour, she began doing nice things for him, too. They fell in love with each other all over again and he forgot all about killing her.

Keith: Huh. That's... quite a story.

Nan: Thank you, Dear! Have you found anything yet? You know, now that I think about it, there is something here that would be the ideal for a gift for Heather.

Keith: Heather? How did you...

Nan: Do you want to see the gift or not?

Keith: Okay. Whatever, lady.

Nan: It's Nan, Dear. Maybe just drop the whole L word thing.

Keith: You think I should get the L out of here?

Nan: Oh that was very clever! Not the response but the distraction from my point.

Keith: Right, right, so, what have you got in mind... Nan?

Nan: Well... let me think... Heather likes many nice, tasteful and beautiful things. She also likes country music.

Keith: Wait. What did you mean by that?

Nan: She also loves antiques and jewelry... but then, what woman doesn't love jewelry? Now where did I see it? Ah here it is... **(Nan shows Keith a small square, flat box. She opens it and takes out a necklace with a heart on a chain.)** The inscription reads, "Love you forever" and underneath it is a certified original first pressing 45 RPM vinyl record of Randy Travis's "Forever and Ever, Amen".

Keith: Oh my g...

Nan: Gosh?

Keith: What? Yeah. Though “gosh” doesn’t cover it. It’s... perfect. Oh thank you so much, Nan. You don’t know what this means to me. Or will mean to Heather.

Nan: Oh yes I do! Now remember, from now on, every time you are about to call her old lady, you will say “sweetie” instead.

Keith: Or what?

Nan: Or you will hear my voice remind you. You won’t be able to help it. It’s like not thinking of purple elephants when someone says, “Don’t think about purple elephants!”

Keith: Fine. Sweetie it is. It probably makes me look bad saying it anyway. So how much do I owe you? That chain looks like real antique gold. I only have a hundred bucks on me.

Nan: That would be plenty. Plus a hug. Or no deal.

Keith: (Handing her the money) Are you kidding me? I’m happy to! **(They hug.)** Thank you, Nan. Thank you so much. You have no idea what you...

Nan: Now, now, don’t get all mushy on me. Save it for your sweetie. Off you go.

(Keith exits.)

(Scene 2)

Nan: That went very well! And a hundred dollars for the kitty, too! (She goes to a cash box and puts the money in. Still a ways to go, though. **(She looks at her watch.)** The next one should be along any minute. Ah... here she is now.

(Enter Sally looking sad.)

Sally: Good morning, Ma’am.

Nan: Please call me Nan. What’s your name, Dear?

Sally: I'm Sally. I live across town but my grandpa lives close by here. I was just on my way to visit and cheer him up.

Nan: Cheer him up? Why is he so sad?

Sally: After Grandma passed away last year, he seems to have lost a lot of his... interest in life. He gets so lonely but I only have so much free time between classes and homework. I worry about him so much. I thought maybe there was something here which might help him pass the time. It's kind of ironic; he has so much of it on his hands but who knows how much he has left?

Nan: They say when we are young, the days are short but the years are long. As seniors, the days are long but the years are short.

Sally: Is that how it is for you, Nan?

Nan: I'm not sure, Dear. I'm still too young to know how I will feel when I'm old. **(They both laugh.)** Please look around. Maybe there is something here he might like to do.

Sally: Maybe... Not sure what kind of thing he needs. His memory is starting to slip a bit and he can't use anything too complicated.

Nan: I'm afraid what he needs most isn't in this garage.

Sally: What do you mean?

Nan: What your grandpa needs is company. Of course you have your own life to live, but you want to be a good grandchild, too. It's a struggle between many oldsters and their kids and grandkids... it's often the first time any of us really confronts how precious time is.

Sally: I don't suppose you have extra time for sale, do you, Nan?

Nan: None for sale, sorry. But I do have some to share with you for free. You know, Sally, I have an idea... now where did I see it? Hmmm... aha! Here it is.

Wait til you see the amazing pictures in here! **(Nan holds a photo album up and opens it to reveal empty pages.)**

Sally: Wait... what amazing photos? The album entirely empty!

Nan: Well it is now. But did you know in your grandpa's attic there are dozens of shoe boxes filled with old photos from his life with your grandma?

Sally: Really? How do you know this?

Nan: Every old couple has a stash of photos saved like that. Trust me. It's there.

Sally: If you say so...

Nan: They will be by the Christmas tree tote on the left.

Sally: Wait a minute, Nan, how do you...

Nan: Does it really matter? The important thing is that your grandpa is going to need help with this project...

Sally: I would love to see all those old photos!

Nan: Maybe you could set aside a special time each week... something for your grandfather to look forward to?

Sally: That's a great idea! I don't have any afternoon classes on Wednesdays.

Nan: It will also give him some sense of routine while making you feel you're doing your part. A short phone call at the same time every evening would also help you both a great deal.

Sally: Oh, Nan. Thank you for this! How much is the photo album, anyway?

Nan: That's all right, dear. I was just going to throw it away anyway. Nobody uses photo albums anymore. But that's only because we don't always understand the value of things. It will cost you a hug, though.

Sally: I can't just take it, Nan! Look. Here's twenty dollars. Please take it. It's the best twenty bucks I've spent this year. (She hands her the twenty and they hug.)

Nan: Wait, Sally. There's something here you might be interested in, yourself.

Sally: Oh? I can't imagine needing anything among this... stuff. Who buys 8 tracks and cassettes anymore anyway? And VHS tapes? Does anyone have a player still?

Nan: Over here... in this box. **(They go to a box on the table which contains books which Nan starts to take out and peer closely at before discarding.)**

Sally: I don't really have a lot of free time for reading...

Nan: Yes. I knew they were in here. Looking for these?

Sally: Holy cow! Those are the texts I need for this semester! Those books cost a fortune! Where did you get them? How did you know I needed them?

Nan: So many questions! I'm afraid I can't just give these to you, my dear, but I can sell them all to you for fifty dollars.

Sally: Are you kidding me? They are ten times that at the university book store!

Nan: And yet they still sleep at night somehow.

Sally: Here's fifty. Who would have thought a visit to a garage sale would change my life? Thanks so much, Nan! **(They hug again.)**

Nan: You are most welcome, Dear.

Sally: Say, you wouldn't want to meet my grandpa, would you? He'd really like you!

Nan: **(She giggles coquettishly.)** Oh my! Are you trying to fix me up? That is just the sweetest thing. I'm sorry, Dear, but I'm out of the dating pool. Besides I'm way too old for him.

Sally: You don't seem that old to me, Nan. I wasn't really serious anyway... unless you had been... Anyway, I better go see him and tell him about your wonderful idea. Bye! Nice meeting you!

Nan: Goodbye, Sally! Good luck with your studies!

(Sally exits)

(Scene 3)

Nan: What a nice young lady. And another seventy dollars for the kitty! The kitty is still a wee bit peckish. Over halfway there, though! **(She turns her back to put the money in the cash box.)**

(Enter Tessa)

Tessa: Hello?

Nan: Oh my goodness! You startled me! You mustn't startle old ladies, Dear. Surprises can lead to other surprises for us.

Tessa: You mean like a heart attack?

Nan: Maybe not anything that dramatic but wet undergarments can constitute a crisis too. You may as well shoot me as make me die of embarrassment!

Tessa: I see what you mean. I am really sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

Nan: That's fine, Dear. Now what can I help you with? Looking for something in particular? I'm Nan, by the way. And you are?

Tessa: Tessa. I'm not really sure what I'm looking for. Inspiration, maybe.

Nan: What's troubling you, Tessa? You can tell me. I won't tell a soul. I'm not even on Facebook!

Tessa: I'm just worried about my Mom. She insists on living alone and not being a burden on me and my family. We don't have room for her anyway with the kids already doubled up in the bedrooms. We just have a small apartment.

Nan: It sounds like your Mom is doing okay, though, isn't she?

Tessa: Oh yeah. She's awesome. Dad thought she would fold like a dollar store tent when he... had to leave... but she didn't. She got herself a great job and bought her own place. But right now she's recuperating from hip surgery and doesn't get around too well.

Nan: Oh dear! My goodness it must be difficult for her. You know, I think I have something here which will help you...

Tessa: Really? What do you have in mind?

Nan: Here they are... in this box under the table. It's a whole bunch of aluminum containers with lids.

Tessa: Why on earth would I need a ton of... wait a minute... of course! I could make her meals and freeze them for her! All she would have to do is throw them in the toaster oven!

Nan: It is a great way to deal with leftovers, too. Just pop them in a container for your Mom. Also, to help you fill those containers, I have something which might help. How about a \$100 gift card for the grocery store for half price? You can check the amount is still on the card with your phone.

Tessa: That would be fantastic! I was just heading there! Say, you don't have any more do you? Groceries are crazy expensive anymore.

Nan: As a matter of fact, I have four all together. And you can have the containers just because.

Tessa: Because why? They must be worth a lot.

Nan: Two reasons, my dear. Firstly, because you have a beautiful smile to match your beautiful heart. And the other is because I said so. Plus you owe me a hug.

Tessa: Here's the money, Nan. Not sure why I decided to pay for my groceries with cash today... good thing I did! Thank you so much! (They hug.)

Nan: It's one way to ensure you don't go over budget. Can you manage that box, Tessa? Excellent. Thanks for stopping by!

(Tessa exits.)

Nan: What a lovely person. You meet the nicest folks at garage sales. And two hundred dollars for the kitty! That is just enough. **(She puts the money in the cash box then comes to the front of the "garage" and checks her watch.)** Ah yes. Perfect timing. Well, I best be off. My work here, as they say, is done.

(Nan exits. The stage is empty for five seconds then Gary and Peg enter.)

Peg: You lunkhead! Did you leave the garage door open? You'll be lucky if you have any good stuff left. Not that I saw any actual good stuff.

Gary: I swear I locked it before we went for brunch, Peg! Good thing I hadn't put the float in the cash box yet. That would be long gone.

Peg: Can you tell if anything is missing? I didn't take a really good look but it doesn't seem any different than when we left.

Gary: If they were going to steal something, you'd think they would have started with my golf clubs. They are worth almost five hundred bucks.

Peg: I'm sure if any light-fingered loser had robbed us, the ten gallon gas can would have been a tempting target, too.

Gary: (circling the tables looking at his phone.) Actually, I took photos of the tables to put on Facebook. I don't see anything out of place other than the books and every one is still here. Weird.

Peg: That is strange.

Gary: Wait, the cash box is in a slightly different place. **(He goes to it and opens it.)** Holy... Peg! You won't believe this! **(He counts the money.)**

Peg: How much is there? Is there a note or anything?

Gary: It's... \$370. No note... but a message.

Peg: A message?

Gary: After that talk we had about spending more time together, I considered dumping my golf buddies to teach you the game. You can be my golf buddy. I told myself if I could make \$370 from this garage sale, I would buy you the same clubs I have. They are on special at the pro shop for exactly three hundred and seventy bucks. This is unbelievable.

Peg: Really Gary? That is the sweetest thing you have ever done. I love you so much!

Gary: I love you too, Peg. For some reason, I really, really need a hug right now.

Peg: Me too.

(They hug.)

Curtain

