**The Person in Charge**

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***Characters:*** *GRANNY JUNE – A 101-year-old woman*

*ROB – Her great-grandson, in his late thirties, wearing a dark suit*

*CADEN - Her 13-year-old great-great grandson*

***Setting:***

*Present day, mid-morning in a house in suburban New Jersey. Lights up on GRANNY JUNE, asleep in an armchair in her living room. ROB and CADEN are a distance away, watching her and talking softly.)*

CADEN:

Seriously, Dad. What if she falls or something?

ROB:

Then you’ll help her up. At this point, she’s nowhere near five feet tall and she only weighs about ninety pounds.

CADEN:

I know. But look at her. She’s really frail. I could crush her spine or something while I’m trying to move her.

ROB:

You’re won’t hurt her spine. And she’s not likely to fall. She stays in that chair nearly all day unless she needs to use the bathroom.

CADEN:

Wait, thebathroom? She goes to the *bathroom*?

ROB:

Everybody goes to the bathroom at some point. She may not have to go while you’re here, but it’s possible.

CADEN:

Hey, come on! Nobody said anything about me having to bring Granny June to the bathroom. Oh, man!

ROB:

It’s no big deal, Caden. She uses that powder room off the kitchen, and she can get herself there with her walker.

CADEN:

Yeah? Then what?

ROB:

Nothing difficult. You get her walker out of the way so she can transfer to the toilet.

CADEN:

*Seriously*? Dad!

ROB:

What? No, don’t worry. Be sure that she gets seated properly and she’ll do the rest. Then you bring her walker back and steady her until she holds onto it.

CADEN:

Promise?

ROB:

I swear.

CADEN:

I’m not wiping anything!

ROB:

You won’t have to. There’s nothing to it.

CADEN:

Okay, but what if she falls off the toilet? She could break her hip or hit her head or something.

ROB:

Don’t worry, son, that’s not going to happen. You need to calm down now because I really have to get going.

CADEN:

You know, I’ve never had any first aid training. I won’t know what to do if Granny June has an emergency.

ROB:

Then we’ll sign you up for a first aid class when we get home, but for now I don’t think it’s going to be an issue.

CADEN:

I read that a lot of people have heart attacks in the bathroom. Everyone’s gonna blame me if she goes in there and dies.

ROB:

You’re overthinking this, Caden. I know you’ll do fine. You just have to give Granny June her lunch and her meds. She’ll probably sleep most of the time.

CADEN:

In Illinois, you guys won’t even leave me home to take care of myself.

ROB:

Well, in New Jersey we have no choice. Someone has to be the person in charge until the agency can send a home health aide.

CADEN:

Dad, I really don’t want to do this.

ROB:

You didn’t want to go to the service either, remember? And I definitely have to go right now. I’m already late.

CADEN:

But Dad—

ROB:

Look, Caden, it’s not rocket science. The instruction sheet and the pills are on the table, and the aide will be here before you know it.

CADEN

How long do you think it’ll be?

ROB:

Not too long. You’ll probably be able to meet us at the restaurant. I really have to get moving. Thanks for stepping up, bud. See you later.

*(ROB exits. CADEN looks around, then hesitantly approaches GRANNY JUNE. After a few moments she stirs, then sits straighter.)*

GRANNY JUNE:

It’s all right, I’m awake. Wait, do I know you?

CADEN:

Sort of. We used to live around here, but we moved to the Chicago area when I was five.

GRANNY JUNE:

That’s right. Are you Elaine’s boy?

CADEN:

No, she’s my grandmother. I mean, she was my grandmother.

GRANNY JUNE:

Have a seat. *(Points to a chair and he sits.)* What’s your name?

CADEN:

Caden.

GRANNY JUNE:

Caden? What kind of a name is that for a little boy?

CADEN:

Actually there’s three Cadens in my school but one of them’s a girl. And I’m not that little. I’m thirteen and a half.

GRANNY JUNE:

That’s little to me. I’m a hundred and one, you know.

CADEN:

Yeah, my dad told me. So, um . . . how are you feeling, Granny June?

GRANNY JUNE:

I’m feeling a hundred and one. And a half. I’m asleep for most of the day and I don’t walk very well anymore.

CADEN:

That’s too bad.

GRANNY JUNE:

My hearing’s pretty good, but my sight’s going so I can’t read the newspaper. And everything seems to hurt.

CADEN:

Well, I have to give you a pill now. Maybe that’ll make you feel better. *(Picks up pill box and consults paper)* It says you have to take this yellow pill with six ounces of liquid.

GRANNY JUNE:

Ugh, that one tastes terrible. *(Points to pitcher)* Can you pour me some water?

CADEN:

Sure. How come people always drink water with pills?I mean, wouldn’t they taste better if you took them with something else?

GRANNY JUNE:

I don’t know. They might. Do you have any Coca-Cola?

CADEN:

No, I’m not allowed to have soda.

GRANNY JUNE:

Why not? When I was young we drank Cokes all the time.

CADEN:

My mom says it has too much sugar. It’s weird because she puts sugar in her coffee. Hey, I know how to make coffee if you want some.

GRANNY JUNE:

No, I’m not allowed to have coffee. I think we have some juice, though.

CADEN:

*(Gets up)* I’ll go check.

*(CADEN exits. GRANNY JUNE leans back and nods off. CADEN returns with two bottles and sets them down. After some hesitation he taps her shoulder.)*

CADEN:

Granny June?

GRANNY JUNE:

What? *(Sits up straighter)* What’s wrong?

CADEN:

You didn’t take your pill yet. Dad said to be sure you get your meds on time. I’m sorry I had to wake you.

GRANNY JUNE:

That’s all right, Robbie. I’ll be asleep again in no time. Now where did you put my water glass?

CADEN:

Over here. But I found some apple juice and Coke in the kitchen.

GRANNY JUNE:

Good, then I’ll have a little Coke. *(CADEN pours it and hands it to her with a pill.)* That’s more like it. Do you want some?

CADEN:

I better not. Oh, I have to find out what time you ate breakfast.

GRANNY JUNE:

I’m not sure that I did. Why?

CADEN:

So I’ll know what time to give you lunch. You’re supposed to take that green pill with food.

GRANNY JUNE:

Isn’t it awful? Sometimes my mind’s so clear and then it goes blank. I can still recall the day Pearl Harbor was attacked and I can recite the poem I wrote for my graduation. But breakfast? I just don’t know.

CADEN:

It’s okay. We’ll figure it out.

GRANNY JUNE:

I remember President Kennedy’s assassination like it was yesterday. Only I don’t remember yesterday. And I forget why you’re here.

CADEN:

Because your home care person got sick.

GRANNY JUNE:

Which one? The Indian lady or the Jamaican one or that young girl with the tattoos? Are they all sick today?

CADEN:

I’m not sure. Dad asked me to be the person in charge until the agency can find somebody to send here.

GRANNY JUNE:

In charge? You’re in charge of *me*?

CADEN:

No! I mean, I’m just in charge of the house—you know, answering the door and stuff. And I have to make sure you get lunch and take your medication.

GRANNY JUNE:

When did you get here?

CADEN:

Around 9:30. Dad and Grandpop introduced me and then you fell asleep. So far you’ve mostly been sleeping.

GRANNY JUNE:

But what happened to everybody else? Why isn’t Elaine home today? And where’s . . . where’s her husband?

CADEN:

Grandpop? Um . . . I think he had to go to church this morning. My mom and dad went with him, then they’re going out for lunch.

GRANNY JUNE:

Why? It’s not Sunday. Is it?

CADEN:

No, it’s Tuesday.

GRANNY JUNE:

Tuesday. Shouldn’t you be in school?

CADEN:

I would be except I was supposed to go to with my parents.

GRANNY JUNE:

To church? Wait, somebody said they went to a funeral.

CADEN:

I’m not really sure. (*Looks away and picks up his phone.)*

CADEN:

It’s okay, Robbie, you can tell me.

CADEN:

Yeah. They . . . um . . . went to a memorial service.

GRANNY JUNE:

You are Robbie, aren’t you?

CADEN:

No, Rob is my dad. I’m Caden.

GRANNY JUNE:

That’s right. You’re Caden. Robbie is my great-grandson. He’s Elaine’s boy. And that makes you my great . . . *great* grandson. Just think of that! So tell me, how old is Robbie now?

CADEN:

Dad? He’s thirty-eight.

GRANNY JUNE:

He was named after my son. Robert Gregory. But we called him Bobby. He died, hmm . . . about four years ago. My daughter Lynn died a year after that. *(Sighs)* So I don’t have any living children.

CADEN:

My dad says his grandpa was really cool. He played the fiddle and built a canoe and he taught Dad how to fish. Now Dad’s teaching me.

GRANNY JUNE:

Lynn never married but Bobby did. He had twin boys and a daughter named Elaine. Do you know her?

CADEN:

Sure. She was--she’s my Grandma. I didn’t see her much once we moved away, but she used to babysit for me.

GRANNY JUNE:

I used to mind Elaine when she was little. She was sweet child and she had beautiful blond curls.

CADEN:

She knitted me a red blanket because that’s my favorite color. And we used to play Crazy Eights and bake cookies. You know, that is pretty awesome. My grand*mother* is your grand*daughter*.

GRANNY JUNE:

Elaine’s been taking care of me ever since—wait, it’s her funeral today, isn’t it? *(CADEN nods and she begins sobbing softly.)*

CADEN:

I’m sorry, Granny June. (*Moves closer and pats her awkwardly.)* I guess they didn’t tell you.

GRANNY JUNE:

No, I’m sure they told me. My mind just went out again. *(Straightens up)* I outlived my children and now I’m outliving my grandchildren.

CADEN:

Wow.

GRANNY JUNE:

Don’t mind me, son. I’m just feeling a little sorry for myself. I never thought they’d all go first and I’d still be here.

CADEN:

Yeah, but isn’t it sorta cool that you’ve been alive for such a long time? You must’ve really done something right.

GRANNY JUNE:

What makes you say that?

CADEN:

Well, when anyone dies, my parents always talk about why it happened.

GRANNY JUNE:

Why it happened? You mean they sit around talking about what the poor dead person did wrong?

CADEN:

Sometimes. They’re not mean about it but yeah, they say stuff like this lady shouldn’t have smoked and that guy drank a lot and those people didn’t exercise or ate too much junk food.

GRANNY JUNE:

So those people slipped up and got punished with *death*? Maybe. *(Laughs)* Maybe not.

CADEN:

Did you eat healthy and exercise a lot, Granny June? Are you a vegan?

GRANNY JUNE:

Of course not. I’m a Presbyterian.

CADEN:

No, a vegan’s somebody who—

GRANNY JUNE:

I was kidding. Even old people can joke sometimes.

CADEN:

I guess. *(Laughs)* It is funny, ‘cause vegan sounds kinda like pagan.

GRANNY JUNE:

Is a vegan anything like a vegetarian?

CADEN:

Yeah, but it’s worse. A guy on our basketball team’s a vegan and when we go out for pizza he has to take the cheese off.

GRANNY JUNE:

I can’t imagine pizza without cheese.

CADEN:

I know, right?

GRANNY JUNE:

Pizza’s so good. Especially with mushrooms.

CADEN:

Or bacon.

GRANNY JUNE:

I used to love bacon. Now they always buy turkey bacon, and it’s not too bad but it really doesn’t taste the same.

CADEN:

After the cemetery, Dad says they’re going to a place called Colletta’s that has the best pizza.

GRANNY JUNE:

We used to eat there all the time. It’s just around the block.

CADEN:

I know. Dad said if the health aide gets here by one-thirty I should walk over to Colletta’s and meet them for lunch.

GRANNY JUNE:

I’m sorry you had to stay with me today.

CADEN:

No, it’s okay, Granny June. I’d rather be here. I never really got to talk to you before and I get to eat pizza a lot.

GRANNY JUNE:

You’re lucky. I never have pizza these days.

CADEN:

That’s a shame. Hey, you know what? I could text my dad and ask him to bring you a pizza.

GRANNY JUNE:

No, you shouldn’t bother him during the . . . the service.

CADEN:

Oh, I forgot about your breakfast. *(Gets up and looks around)* Look, there’s a yogurt carton in the trash can. Is that from today?

GRANNY JUNE:

It might be. . . That’s right, it was! I had a peach yogurt and a muffin right before Kelly Ripa came on the TV.

*(CADEN punches buttons on his phone and studies the screen for a few moments.)*

CADEN:

Got it. So that means you ate a little before nine.

GRANNY JUNE:

How did you know that? Do you watch Kelly too?

CADEN:

No, I looked up her show. It started two and a half hours ago, so it should be time for your lunch pretty soon. Are you getting hungry yet?

GRANNY JUNE:

Not too much. I have to tell you, meals are no fun these days.

CADEN:

Well, could you try to eat something anyway? I’m not supposed to give you the next pill unless you have food with it.

GRANNY JUNE:

All right. But first do you mind if I nap a little bit?

CADEN:

Sure, just go ahead and rest for a while. Maybe I could wake you in half an hour if that’s okay.

GRANNY JUNE:

That’ll be fine.

CADEN:

Do you need a blanket or anything?

GRANNY JUNE:

How about that blue afghan over there? Elaine crocheted it for me, you know.

*(CADEN spreads the afghan over her. He starts to leave but turns back when she speaks.)*

To tell the truth, I was never one of those healthy people. I smoked for almost thirty years and I loved a good dry martini. And I ate plenty of cheeseburgers and potato chips. Candy bars too.

CADEN:

Wow! Do my parents know about that?

GRANNY JUNE:

But I have to say, I was pretty active. I walked a lot and I bicycled and played tennis. Oh, and I played basketball just like you.

CADEN:

Seriously?

GRANNY JUNE:

Of course. Basketball was all the rage when I was young. Sometimes I watch the games on TV and once I saw Michael Jordan play at the Meadowlands.

CADEN:

That’s awesome! My friend’s uncle took us to a Bulls-Lakers game and got us LeBron’s autograph. He’s a sportswriter and that’s what I’m gonna be. Or I’ll be a lawyer like my dad.

GRANNY JUNE:

I’ll bet you could be either one. I can tell you’re very smart.

CADEN:

Thanks. *(The house phone shrills and he jumps up.)* What’s that?

GRANNY JUNE:

That’s the telephone! For heaven’s sake, haven’t you ever heard one before? Doesn’t that little phone of yours ever ring?

CADEN:

No, when somebody calls me, my phone plays “Uptown Funk.”

GRANNY JUNE:

Uptown *what*? Never mind, just answer it.

*(CADEN finds the landline phone on a table and fumbles with the receiver before speaking.)*

CADEN:

Hello? . . . Okay, but is the home health aide already on her way here? . . . *(Glances at GRANNY JUNE, whose eyes are closed, and lowers his voice slightly)* Good, then tell her never mind. We already found somebody else for this afternoon so we’re not going to need her after all . . . Of course I’m family. I’m the person in charge today . . . Yes, I’m sure. Thanks anyway.

*(CADEN hangs up, takes out his wallet, removes bills and counts them. Then he picks up his own phone, hits buttons for a quick search and places a call.)*

Hi, how much is a large pizza plus delivery? We’re right around the block on Willow Street . . . Great, then make it half mushroom and half bacon. You do use real bacon, right?

END