

Granny Beggard's Chair

by

Howard Firkin

PRODUCTION NOTE

The main character, Granny Beggard, is played by two actors: one at least forty years younger than the other. In the dialogue, they are given as Granny B (old) and Granny B (young) respectively.

There are occasions in the play when the old woman is 'transformed' into the younger. Instead of writing complicated stage directions - the old woman sinks down behind the bed and the younger woman stands to replace her - I have left this to the wit of the director and cast to undertake, whether this transformation is masked by props and lighting or performed openly, I couldn't care less. Not my job. I have simply noted as Scene Action GRANNY BEGGARD TRANSFORMS. There are no directions regarding entry or exit from the stage when this happens.

Because two actors are playing the one character separated by time, it might be helpful if actors of similar height and colouring were chosen and you might chose to have them similarly dressed. Or not. Your call. As I'll never get to see it, it hardly matters to me.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Granny Beggard (old)	A white woman in her mid 70s to early 80s who shows the traces of hard living. Not an alcoholic, but not averse to a drink.
Granny Beggard (young)	Granny Beggard was a stage performer in her younger days; so the younger actor should be suitably attractive.
Policeman	No reason this couldn't be a policewoman, but you'd want to change the name from Trevor. Trevette?
Jai	A young, buff aboriginal man
Marcus	A white contemporary of Jai's
Mayor	Middle-aged whitefella.
Reporter	Female television reporter

ACT I

SCENE 1

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF

GRANNY BEGGARD (YOUNG) WALKS ONTO A STAGE WITH ONLY A SPOT LIT CHAIR IN THE MIDDLE OF IT. SHE SITS AND SETTLES HERSELF BEFORE SPEAKING TO THE AUDIENCE.

Granny B (young)

I am playing the young me. Not the me of the title, but the me of forty odd years earlier. I know you're all used to the fabulous make-up of the movies and television and homemade youtube clips in which actors are magically transformed from adolescence to old age to play themselves throughout the long, long years of their lives, but not in this play. This is the theatre and actors are cheaper than make-up artists; so you'll have to put up with two mes: young me - me; and old me - who comes on next.

There is a nude scene in the play and I have nice breasts; so there are benefits for you in indulging us. How nice? Well, I got the part, didn't I? Later... later...

(INDICATES THE CHAIR SHE IS SITTING ON)
This isn't it, by the way. This is not the chair of the title. This is just a chair. Freud said that. Said "Sometimes a chair is just a cigar." And sometimes a nude scene is actually called for and not an excuse to perve on someone with nice breasts. What do I care? I got the part.

We haven't bothered too much with costuming. As you can see! I mean, we haven't bothered too much about getting the fashions exactly right for me forty years apart. We thought it wasn't really necessary. You can tell I'm not a Granny and you can tell Granny isn't a young woman. So when I'm on, it's forty years ago. And when I'm not, it's now. Unless we're both on together, and then it's either forty years ago and I'm imagining forwards, or it's now and I'm remembering the past. You'll get the hang of it.

The author of this is a creep. I'll tell you what he said later. Perhaps you'll understand why I'm doing all this ad lib stuff now. Before intermission I get another chance, and I'm going to tell you what he said to me after I got the part. It'll make you want to vomit into your choc tops.

Okay. On with the show. (STANDS) Scene: a small country town in the state still then called 'Victoria'.

SHE TURNS THE CHAIR TO FACE ONE WING OF THE STAGE. GRANNY BEGGARD (OLD) ENTERS AND SITS IN THE CHAIR. THE POLICEMAN ENTERS AND WALKS SLOWLY OVER TO GRANNY BEGGARD (OLD)

A policeman approaches an old woman in a car who seems to be having trouble starting it... (EXIT)

ACT I

SCENE 2

GETTING GRANNY HOME

THE POLICEMAN WALKS SLOWLY AND DISCONSOLATELY TOWARDS GRANNY BEGGARD (OLD). HE PAUSES BY HER SIDE AND KNOCKS ON THE WINDOW OF THE CAR.

Policeman

Marilyn! Good evening!

Granny B (old)

Trevor, good evening. No need to trouble yourself...

Policeman

No trouble, Marilyn. You were trying to lock the car so you can walk home safely?

Granny B (old)

Don't be impertinent. I'm just trying to start the car to drive home, if that's any of your business.

Policeman

Yep, that's my business. Marilyn, you're trying to start the car with your house key. And I don't think driving home is a good idea, do you?

Granny B (old)

Trevor. I have had two drinks. No more. I'm perfectly able to drive.

Policeman

But not so good on the counting, apparently. That's enough, Marilyn. Out you come. Lock the car and I'll run you home.

Granny B (old)

What a lot of fuss over nothing. Ridiculous, Trevor.

Policeman

That's me, Ridiculous Trevor. No more arguments. Let's go. I've got a busy night.

THEY WALK TOGETHER IN THE DIRECTION FROM WHICH THE POLICEMAN ENTERED, HIS ARM AROUND HER.

Granny B (old)

Busy? What else are you going to be doing tonight?

Policeman

You don't think you're the last one to leave the pub, do you?

THEY EXIT.

ACT I

SCENE 3

PUTTING THE TOWN ON THE MAP

THE MAYOR ENTERS HOLDING NOTES FOR HIS SPEECH. HE SITS ON THE CHAIR FACING THE AUDIENCE. PAUSES AS IF LISTENING TO SOMEONE INTRODUCING HIM THEN RISES TO HIS FEET AND ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE. THERE ARE ONE OR TWO HECKLES DURING HIS SPEECH. THESE ARE CALLED BY ACTORS FROM WITHIN THE THEATRE.

Mayor

We all love this town. We all choose to live here, don't we? And no one wants to lose the reasons we live here. No one wants to change Mullock into something awful. We could move to Melbourne if we wanted that!

Now, Mullock is isn't dying. Not by a long shot. And it won't die while there are enough of us who care about it to keep it alive. It isn't dying, but it isn't growing, either, and we need growth. We need some level of growth for the town to survive and thrive, and I suppose that's what I'm all about here. I want this town to thrive, not just survive.

I've lived in Mullock most of my life. You all know me. I love this town. But where are the kids, like me, who grew up in this town? Most of them, look around the room, most of them are gone. Gone to where the jobs are. Gone to where the opportunities are. Gone to where the other young people are. Well, we have to find a way to bring them, or others like them, back to Mullock.

The point of tonight's meeting is to agree on a strategy to revive the town. As you all know, I and the rest of the council have been calling for ideas and tonight we are going to review them, briefly, and announce our strategy going forward. We've gone through an exhaustive analysis of the proposals, and we've grouped them into various themes that they suggested to us: Musical and Artistic, Commerce and

Investment, One-off Events, and Miscellaneous Others. We then took the best idea from each category, judged them on their merits, and then selected the final idea.

Mayor

I'd like to begin tonight by thanking and congratulating all the townsfolk who submitted ideas. A lot of thought and imagination has gone into most of them - some of the Miscellaneous Others are a bit dodgy - but I think we can all be confident that if we apply the same hard work and imagination and all pull together, we can ensure a future for Mullock into and beyond the twenty-first century.

PAUSES FOR APPLAUSE. A SMATTERING OF HALF-HEARTED CLAPPING IS HEARD.

Thank you. By far the most frequently suggested ideas was some sort of annual festival celebrating some form of the arts. Here are the ones we considered the best and most practical.

A POWERPOINT SLIDE APPEARS BEHIND THE MAYOR HEADED 'MUSICAL AND ARTISTIC'. FIVE BULLET POINTS DANCE ON IN A VARIETY OF ANIMATIONS AND FONTS: - JAZZ FESTIVAL; - REALISTIC ART; - SCULPTURE AND SCULPTURE PARK; - BUSH POETRY; - KNITTING, CROCHET, TATTING AND COUNTRY ARTS.

Special thanks to my wife, Joyce, for helping me with the slides.

Good ideas, all, but in the end, we rejected the Jazz and Bush Poetry festivals, because there are other towns in the state holding similar events.

Realistic Art was certain to attract lots of painters who wanted to exhibit and sell their work, but would it attract anyone wanting to buy?

Knitting, Crochet, and Tatting - a bit like the Art show - would probably get quite a few people here, but would it

attract young people? And would it lead to any long term growth for the town? We thought not.

So, in the end, in this category, we selected...

A NEW SLIDE IS SHOWN WITH ALL THE BULLET POINTS BUT SCULPTURE PARK ANIMATING OFF THE SCREEN AND THE 'WINNING' BULLET POINT SPINNING AND FLASHING EXUBERANTLY.

The Sculpture Prize and Sculpture Park was considered an excellent idea. There is council land next to the footy oval that isn't utilised, as we know, and no other town is doing anything like it. If we select the winning sculpture each year for addition to the sculpture park, we end up with a long term tourist attraction.

Now, in the Commerce and Investment category...

A POWERPOINT SLIDE APPEARS BEHIND THE MAYOR HEADED 'COMMERCE AND INVESTMENT'. THREE BULLET POINTS DANCE ON IN A VARIETY OF ANIMATIONS AND FONTS: - HEALTH SPA AND RETREAT; - THIRD AGE HUB; - SINGLE PARENTS SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION.

Health Spa and Retreat. Third Age Hub - this centres around the construction of an old people's home. And, bit controversial this one, cheap housing for single parents.

Okay, the Health Spa, although a brilliant idea, would require us to find a company willing to invest a lot of money in a start up spa. A lot of money. In a region which - unlike the hills or coast - has no history of recuperative resorts. That said, I wouldn't rule out the Health Spa if we could find such an investor. I think it would be brilliant, and, as I've said, there is unused council land adjoining the footy oval, but we've never received any such offers in the past, and I'm not

confident in the current economic climate that we'd find any suitable investors.

That brings me to the Supported Accommodation for Single Mothers.

Heckler 1 Bring me to them as well!

Mayor Thank you. Yes, a bit controversial, this one. Not a bad idea in some ways. It will bring single mothers and their children into the town...

Heckler 2 You just want to be nearer your children!

Mayor I don't think Joyce or I are looking for more children or grandchildren! Look, there are legal problems with this one. Yes, we'd get enrolments at the school up, and we might attract quite a few young mothers, but how can you screen people so that you only get single mothers? Or fathers, of course. Single fathers. But you can't legally actually specify you only want...

Heckler 1 Sluts!

Mayor Single mothers. And how will people in the town who are paying full rent feel about it? No, an interesting idea, and a good 'left field' thought, but we had to reject it as impractical. Which leaves...

A NEW SLIDE IS SHOWN WITH ALL THE BULLET POINTS BUT THIRD AGE HUB ANIMATING OFF THE SCREEN AND THE 'WINNING' BULLET POINT SPINNING AND FLASHING AS BEFORE.

... the Third Age Hub.

Heckler 1 But what is it?

Heckler 2 Yeah, I want to vote for the loose women!

Mayor All right! Thank you. The idea - and I'll talk a bit more about this later on - is to make the town a hub for services and support for people of the third age, for people who have retired. This is not just about - although it does include -

building an old folks' home, but about making Mullock the centre of a hub of services and support.

Granny B (old) (HECKLING) Because nothing attracts the young people like a town full of old people!

Mayor (RECOGNISING HER VOICE) It's not old people that will attract them, Gran. It's jobs. Young people need jobs. Anyway, as I say, we'll talk more about this later in the night. Let's look a couple of the other ideas first.

A POWERPOINT SLIDE APPEARS BEHIND THE MAYOR HEADED 'ONE-OFF EVENTS AND MISCELLANEOUS'. FOUR BULLET POINTS DANCE ON IN A VARIETY OF ANIMATIONS AND FONTS: - MULLOCK CUP SPOUSE IN A WHEELBARROW RACE; - SURVIVAL TRAINING; - INTERNET B&S BALL; - TOWN STOCKS AND CUSTARD PIE THROWING.

Mayor Let's quickly look at some of the other suggestions...

STAGE DARKENS. EXIT MAYOR. AFTER A PAUSE, THE VOICE OF THE MAYOR IS HEARD.

Mayor (OFFSTAGE) ...but in the end the Sculpture Park was rejected for two reasons: 1. We'd have to stump up prize money every year if we couldn't find a sponsor; and, 2. Although the Sculpture Park might eventually become a tourist attraction, it would take many years of holding the prize before that happened. So we're going with the Third Age Hub.

ACT I

SCENE 4

THE SMOKING CEREMONY

DIMLY LIT STAGE. GRANNY BEGGARD (OLD) IS ON STAGE ROLLING A JOINT. AS SHE IS FINISHING, BUT BEFORE SHE LIGHTS IT, JAI ENTERS, DRESSED IN 'TRADITIONAL' ABORIGINAL GARB: OCHRED BODY, RED FABRIC BAND AROUND HIS FOREHEAD, SOME SORT OF LAP-LAP. HE IS SEARCHING THE GROUND INTENTLY, LOOKING FOR SOMETHING. GRANNY BEGGARD (OLD) WATCHES HIM FOR A MOMENT THEN SPEAKS AS SHE LIGHTS THE SPLIFF.

Granny B (old) If you're tracking me, mate, I give up.

Jai Jesus! You scared the shit out of me! That you, Granny?

Granny B (old) It's me. What are you doing in that getup, Jai?

Jai Been helping my auntie with ceremony. Law stuff.

Granny B (old) (SNORTS DERISIVELY) What law stuff? (SHE TAKES A DEEP DRAG)

Jai For the council. Welcome to country. Smoking ceremony. Some bigwig coming to see the mayor.

Granny B (old) (PASSING THE JOINT TO JAI) Well, welcome to my country and my smoking ceremony.

THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOWING SCENE, THE JOINT PASSES BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE PAIR.

Jai Thanks, Gran. I was looking for my lighter. Fell out of my jocks.

Granny B (old) Ah, yes. The traditional jocks of the Ngurelban people. Do they pay you for the gig?

Jai Yeah, they pay, but they're getting stingy about it. They don't want more than two or three of us showing up.

Granny B (old) Can't have too many traditional owners showing up with their hands out, eh? Not since you stopped taking it in sugar and flour. Are you finished there now?

Jai Yeah. Auntie's still drinking their champagne, but I'm done. What're you doing here?

Granny B (old) I'm waiting for Trevor to go to bed so I can drive home!

Jai I could drive you home. I haven't touched a drop.

Granny B (old) It's a deal. I'll get you to look at the verandah while you're there. It needs some of the boards replaced. Maybe some of the posts.

Jai Cool. I'll give you a quote.

Granny B (old) Cash. A quote for cash in hand.

Jai What did you think? Sugar and flour?

Granny B (old) I wish!

ACT II

SCENE 1

THE LAST STRAW

GRANNY BEGGARD (OLD) IS SEATED IN HER CAR AS IN ACT I SCENE 2 TRYING TO START IT. THE POLICEMAN WALKS OVER TO HER.

Policeman Marilyn! Good evening.

Granny B (old) Not now, Trevor. I have to get home.

Policeman Granny, don't start the car, please.

HE WALKS TO THE FRONT OF THE CAR TO PREVENT HER DRIVING.

Granny B (old) Why haven't you gone home? Haven't you got a life, Trevor?

Policeman You know my life is devoted to modern policing. Like now, Marilyn. Highlight of my career. Now, out of the car, please.

Granny B (old) I've only had a couple of shandies tonight, Trevor, and I'm fine to drive.

SHE STARTS THE ENGINE.

Policeman You are not fine to drive. You will turn off the engine and get out off the car now, and I will drive you home.

Granny B (old) I'm fine!

SHE CRASHES THE GEARS, LOOKS OVER HER SHOULDER, THINKING SHE IS IN REVERSE, AND LETS OUT THE CLUTCH. THE CAR JERKS FORWARD, HITTING THE POLICEMEN AND KNOCKING HIM DOWN. SHE MANAGES TO STOP THE CAR BEFORE ANY REAL DAMAGE IS DONE.

Oh, God, I'm sorry, Trevor. I'm sorry. Are you all right? (UNDOING HER SEAT BELT AND GETTING OUT OF THE CAR)

Policeman Jesus, Granny! What the hell? You nearly killed me! (GETTING TO HIS FEET AND FEELING JOINTS AND LIMBS) That's it! You're under arrest. Lock the car and get into the van. You are not driving

anywhere. Not tonight, and not any time soon.

Granny B (old) I'm sorry, Trevor. I'm really sorry. I'll pay for any damage.

Policeman No damage, Granny, just get in the van. You're pinched.

Granny B (old) But I need the car, Trev. You know I need the car. Couldn't I pay a fine?

Policeman In the van, Marilyn. I've had it. You are not driving anywhere. You're under arrest.

Granny B (old) Don't you have to read me my rights, or something?

Policeman You have the right to shut-the-fuck-up and get in the van. I'm not joking, Marilyn. Get in the van. You are under arrest.

EXIT

ACT II

SCENE 2

RUMOUR OF A BIG WIN

THE MAYOR IS SITTING IN HIS OFFICE,
TALKING ON THE PHONE. EACH LISTING
OF HIS CHARACTER INDICATES AN
APPROPRIATE PAUSE AS HE LISTENS TO
THE OTHER PARTY.

Mayor

That's what Kevin said.

Mayor

Nup. He reckons there's a lot of excitement in Melbourne about it. No confirmation yet, but he reckons he's done it.

Mayor

Big win, all right. Jackpot was twenty million; so even if it's split between several - and maybe it isn't - that's still a lot of money.

Mayor

Yeah, *if* we can keep it in the town.

Mayor

A lot of people *love* living here! Why wouldn't you? Especially with that much money. You could do anything.

Mayor

Invested here.

Mayor

That's right. Could be all we need. All we need to kick off, at least.

Mayor

Kevin will know.

Mayor

Yeah, I reckon we'll all know soon enough. Hard to keep twenty million under your bed. Not without buying a big fuckin' bed!

Mayor

Yeah. All right. I'll let you know.

Mayor

Yeah, yeah. We'll talk. Cop you later, sport.

ACT II

SCENE 3

REPLACING THE VERANDAH

... Granny B has revealed 'a small injection of funds'. Jai has measured up the verandah. Jai has offered to build a rocking chair for the verandah...

Granny B (old) I don't want a rocking chair! I want a car. I want some way to get around town. I don't want to be stuck on my own verandah watching what's left of the world go by. I want some way to get around.

Jai I could build you one.

Granny B (old) What? A car?

Jai No. One of those old fashioned chairs they used to use. Carrying people around in London and places. In the old days, in the whitefella dreaming before Downton Abbey.

Granny B (old) A sedan chair! Yes! No rego on a sedan chair!

Jai Easy enough to build. Chair in a box with a couple of strong poles either side.

Granny B (old) But I'd need someone to carry it...

Jai Blokes from the footy club are always looking for work. Easy money! Nothing else on offer round here.

Granny B (old) Yes! Try arresting me in a sedan chair, Trevor, you berk. Two strapping boys to carry me around. Bloody wonderful!

A quote, Jai. For the sedan chair, and make it good - I want this to be eye-catching. Add it into the verandah quote in case I can get it on the insurance.

ACT II

SCENE 4

THE SECRET'S OUT

MAYOR IN HIS OFFICE. HE DIALS HIS HOME NUMBER ON THE TELEPHONE.

Mayor Joyce, it's me.

Mayor Yeah, heard from Kevin. Good news and bad news.

Mayor Newsagent Kevin.

Mayor Yeah, good news and bad news.

Mayor The good news is he's sold the winning Powerball ticket.

Mayor No, not us, obviously. Otherwise I'd be calling from Bali.

Mayor Just a joke. Listen, he's sold the winning ticket to someone here in Mullock.

Mayor Three winners split twenty million.

Mayor No, only one of them's from Mullock.

Mayor Still, that's over six million dollars someone in Mullock's got to play with.

Mayor Yes, that's what I'm thinking.

Mayor Why not? Why not invest some of it in your home town? Why shouldn't she?

Mayor Yeah, it's a she, but that's the bad news.

Mayor I'll give you a clue: she's always been stinking, but now she's stinking rich.

Mayor No! Try again.

Mayor No. Not her. Not married.

Mayor Nope. You won't guess it. Granny Beggard.

Mayor That's right. Granny Beggard. Probably shouldn't call her that now. Miss Marilyn Beggard, now.

Mayor Okay. We'll talk more at home. Have you ever spoken to her much?

Mayor No, I didn't mean that, I just wondered if you'd be best to start the conversation with her eventually. When word gets out.

Mayor No, we're not meant to know anything yet. So keep it under your hat.

Mayor Don't worry. You know this town. Nothing's hidden here. We'll all know soon enough. But when we do, every dog and his mother will be trying for a piece of it; so we have to get in early. For the good of the town.

ACT II

SCENE 5

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE

GRANNY BEGGARDS ARE DISCOVERED
STANDING IN FRONT OF A FULL LENGHT
MIRROR. SEE THE ORIGINAL
INTRODUCTION TO SERIES 1 OF THE
PATTY DUKE SHOW FOR REFERENCE
BEGINNING AT 00:43

([HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=DI
ZGZFMCVQM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DI
ZGZFMCVQM))

Granny B (old)

The best thing about money...

Granny B (young)

...is that it reminds you that you are
young.

Howard Firkin

Granny Beggard's Chair

ACT III

SCENE 1

RIDING IN STATE

Howard Firkin

Granny Beggard's Chair

ACT III

SCENE 2

FEEDING THE CHOOKS

ACT III

SCENE 3