Reconstruction

By James Van Eaton

Characters:

Grandpa: A man of around 60 years of age.
Addie: A girl of around 14 years of age.

Setting:

Grandpa's woodshop. A battered wooden chair sits behind a table overcrowded with woodworking materials. A rickety card table sits to the right with an assortment of tools, and a metal folding chair sits left beneath a pile of random debris.

Lights up on GRANDPA'S woodshop

GRANDPA sits in a beaten wooden chair with his elbows propped against a table jumbled with small wooden pieces, crumpled paper towels, a dusty rag, and assorted small jars of nails and screws. A rickety card table to the right holds a number of tools while a metal folding chair sits on the left beneath a half-completed wood-working project.

GRANDPA
Okay, now if I can just get this stupid thing to…

GRANDPA tries to fit together two tight joints, but one slides off the other and hits the table.

Gah! son of a-

A light knock sounds on the door at left.

Saved by the bell. It's open!

ADDIE sticks in her head from left.

ADDIE
Hey, Grandpa?

GRANDPA
Hey, Addie, what are you doing out here?

ADDIE
Grandma said it was okay. Is it cool if I…?

GRANDPA
Sure, of course. Just be careful, okay? Lots of dangerous stuff out here. Don't want you gettin' hurt.

ADDIE stands awkwardly in the doorway.

GRANDPA
(A pause) Uh, here, why don't we just...

He rises, removes the half-finished project from the chair, and brushes off the seat.

There we go. Little better at least. Have a seat.

ADDIE

I'm good.

GRANDPA

Okay. Well, what brings you to my little corner of the world?

ADDIE

I, uh, thought maybe you could fix something?

GRANDPA

Sure. That's what I do here. What I try to do, anyway. Sometimes it works. What'd you have in mind?

ADDIE

This.

She dangles a golden locket from its chain and drops it in his hands.

It's really, really broken.

GRANDPA

What is it, your locket?

ADDIE

What's left of it.

GRANDPA

No kidding. What'd you do, hit it with a train? One of those days, huh?

ADDIE

One of those years.

GRANDPA

No argument there.

ADDIE

(Indicating the locket)

It kind of fell apart so I tried to jam it back together, but now I can't even get it open.

GRANDPA

Well, let’s see if I can help with that part, at least. Have to tell you, though, this isn’t exactly my area of expertise. (*Squinting*) It’s so tiny. And delicate. I’m not sure my hands are steady enough for this.

ADDIE

But you can try, right? I mean, you have tools, so….

GRANDPA

Oh, I can try. I’m happy to. I’m just saying, you know, don’t expect a miracle.

ADDIE

Why start now?

GRANDPA

(A pause) Yeah, it hasn't really been the... not the ideal situation, is it? New school, new friends, putting up with us.

ADDIE

(Shrugging)

You’re not that bad.

GRANDPA

Thanks, but I mean, it’s gotta be hard. Not having your mom around.

ADDIE

It’s not like she was around much anyway.

GRANDPA

Oh, hey, I didn't mean to...

ADDIE

No, it’s cool. I can take care of myself.

GRANDPA
I'm not saying you can't, I'm saying-

ADDIE
No, it's fine. I'm good at being alone.

GRANDPA
Addie, you're not...you're not *alone*. You've got me, and your grandma. And hey, we're gonna do everything we can to make sure that you're happy and taken care of, okay? *(He fumbles with the locket)* Everything you've been through lately, I think it's high time you got a…Got it!

The locket comes apart and drops a small, cut-to-fit photograph onto the table. GRANDPA and ADDIE both stare at the photograph. Eventually, GRANDPA picks it up and looks it over.

GRANDPA (CONT.)
Look at that. She was something, wasn't she? So beautiful. I know every parent must say that, but… She always had so much energy, you know? You could just see it shining out of her. And that hair, never met a comb it couldn't take in a fight. But everybody loved it, just like they love yours. You know, I'm glad you kept this. I honestly didn't know if you'd want it. Wouldn't have blamed you if you hadn't. *She* wouldn't have. *(He contemplates the locket)* This thing is pretty beat up. You sure you don't wanna just- *(GRANDPA notices that ADDIE is near tears)* Oh, hey, Addie, you okay? I know things aren't exactly-

ADDIE
(Fighting back tears)
No, I'm good. I'm just, uh...

GRANDPA
I don't mean to pry. I'm just trying to-

ADDIE
I know.

GRANDPA
Assess the…

ADDIE
I know.

GRANDPA
…situation. *(A pause)* Still pretty raw, huh?

ADDIE
(Shrugging)
Kind of creeps up sometimes.

GRANDPA
I hear that. *(A pause)* Hey, you...you *do* know not none of it was your fault, right? What happened with your mom? You know her state of mind...

ADDIE
I'm in high school, Grandpa, I know all about depression.

GRANDPA
Oh. Well, that puts you ahead of me. I've been reading "self-help" books.

ADDIE
Are they helping?

GRANDPA
Hell if I know. Maybe? Depends on the day. This thing I'm reading now is… It's all these people who get lost in the woods and wander in circles, crying out in the dark.

ADDIE
Sounds like a horror movie.

GRANDPA
Yeah.

ADDIE
You think that's what happened to mom? She wandered into the woods?

GRANDPA
Does seem to be the expert opinion.

ADDIE
(Bitterly)
And what, just tripped over a bottle of pills?

GRANDPA

Oh, hey, no. That was...that was the end, you know? That was… She wasn't that kind of person. Not someone who would-

ADDIE

What? Kill herself? Abandon me? Not give a shit? I think she-

GRANDPA

Addie, no. You have to understand. She put herself through hell trying to…

ADDIE

She put *me* through hell!

GRANDPA

Only because she *had* to. Because she... God, you have no idea how much she loved you. How much she-

ADDIE

If she loved me so much, why did she *leave*?!

GRANDPA

(A pause) I don't know, kid. I really don't. I'm sorry, I wish I did. I wish I could point to a page in one of those books and say "There it is," but it doesn't work like that. Thing is, I don't think I'll ever understand. I don't think I'll ever really know why she...did what she did. But I know one thing. I know she loved you more than anything. She loved you as hard as she could for as long as she could, and that's... *(He goes to her)* But it wasn't *you*, okay? You didn't do anything wrong. You were her *everything*. And now that you're here, you're gonna be ours. And we're not going anywhere. Your grandma has her walks and her "outings" and she's got me on so many vitamins I'm gonna live to be a thousand.

ADDIE

Promise?

GRANDPA

You won't be able to get rid of me. I'll be out here forever, living off beer and sawdust and working on the same project from years ago. And when your kids or your grandkids break something that they need fixed, I'll work on that just like I'm trying to work on this. *(Beat)* Speaking of, you wanna hand me the screwdriver there? The little one?

ADDIE

This?

ADDIE holds up the screwdriver and GRANDPA takes it from her with a nod.

GRANDPA

Yup. Hopefully it'll work. Smallest one I got.

He selects a small screw from one of the bottles on the table and puts the locket back together.

Okay, If I can at least get the two parts to… Hey, there we go! Now, the casing. Hand me the sledgehammer, would you?

ADDIE stares at GRANDPA in alarm.

GRANDPA

Testing you. Wanted to see if you knew your tools.

ADDIE

I know what a sledgehammer is.

GRANDPA

(Vaguely gesturing toward the table with the tools)

Okay, well, how about a ball-peen hammer?

ADDIE hands over the hammer.

GRANDPA

Not bad. Okay, maybe if I do baby taps.

He tries to use the hammer and screwdriver together.

I don't know. This thing is pretty small.

ADDIE

I mean, It *is* meant for a teen girl.

GRANDPA
Yeah, how come the teen girl isn’t doing this?

ADDIE
Because the teen girl doesn't have any tools...

GRANDPA
Oh, well, we can fix that. What do you want for your birthday? A palm sander or a cordless drill?

ADDIE
Ew, neither.

GRANDPA
What if I can get ‘em in pink?

ADDIE
(Disgusted)
That would be worse.

GRANDPA
(Laughing)
Okay. I’ll find something better. I promise. You know, your mom never liked any of this stuff either. Said it was too loud. *(A pause)* God, I miss her. You know, sometimes I still forget…

ADDIE
Yeah...

GRANDPA
Doesn't matter what the books tell you, or what people say. You still think you should have done something, said something.

ADDIE
Found her in the dark…

GRANDPA

Hey, Addie, if you ever get into trouble, if you ever start to feel...*lost* like she did, I want you to come find me, okay? Me or your grandma. If you're feeling sad or lonely or just… I want you to know there's nothing you could say or do that would make us stop loving you. Whatever the problem is, whatever you're…We'll figure it out, okay? You and me. We'll find a way though. I just need you to give me a chance. Think you could do that for me?

ADDIE

(Quietly)

Sure. I can do that.

GRANDPA

(Exhaling)

Okay, great. That's good, that's... I think we've all spent enough time in the dark. *(Beat*) Now, this thing…

He replaces the picture in the locket, closes the clasp, and holds it up as though to catch the light.

I definitely did something, but I don't know if it's better or worse.

ADDIE

(Taking back the locket)

Better.

GRANDPA

You haven't even…

ADDIE

Anything's better than broken.

GRANDPA

There is that. Hey, you wanna stick around a while? Learn how to use some of this stuff? Could come in handy if you ever need to fix something.

ADDIE

Why would I need to fix something? I have you. And you're not going anywhere. You're taking vitamins.

GRANDPA

(Laughing)

Okay, yeah. You got me there.

ADDIE

Thanks for this, though. You did a good job.

GRANDPA

Good to hear.

ADDIE

(Preparing to leave)

Oh, um, dinner should be ready soon, if you wanna get cleaned up. I was supposed to tell you that.

GRANDPA

Got it. Message received. I'll be in as soon as I can figure out this one last thing.

ADDIE

Okay, cool. See you in there.

GRANDPA

See you then.

ADDIE exits left. GRANDPA, sits alone with his thoughts before returning with a sigh to the two pieces of wood from before.

GRANDPA

Okay, you little bastard, let's see if we can...

The pieces fit perfectly into place.

GRANDPA

(Amazed)

Huh, son of a bitch…

End of Scene
End of Play