

WAR OF THE GRANDMAS

written by

Mary Huckstep

Yorkhouse@dslextreme.com

A BLACK SCREEN

We hear an engine barely cranking: WAAA... WAAA...
WAAA.

Beat.

Then again: WAAA... WAAA... WAAA.

FADE IN:

EXT. A seattle SUBURB - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A panoraminc view of a small bedroom community -- with Mt. Rainier featured prominently in the background - maybe 100 miles away. The homes look dated, yet comfy.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

It's a Main Street right out of the 60s, out of reach from the greater Seattle sprawl. At one end of the street, a brown and white billboard proclaims --

"WELCOME TO CLACKAHOMISH - population, 12,103."

Beyond the billboard is a Community Center, a Ralph's, a Denny's, and a bus shelter. A large, handwritten sign is taped to the wall of the shelter:

"BIG SALE TODAY - MEN'S CLOTHING, POWER TOOLS, FORD ESCORT. TAKE BUS 12 TO LAMBERT STREET."

We hear an engine barely cranking: WAAA... WAAA...
WAAA.

EXT. LAMBERT STREET - ESTABLISHING

At the end of a narrow *cul de sac*, three houses circle the sidewalk and almost touch one another, like three peas in a circular pod.

In the center house, garage sale items litter the driveway.

EXT. PATTY'S HOUSE

An aging Ford Escort is parked at the curb, the hood is open.

A wiry, unadorned old broad -- PATTY, 60s -- watches as a Latino BOY, 8, studies the engine and waits.

INSERT:

THE ESCORT'S IGNITION

A callused hand turns the key: WAAAH... WAAAH...
WAAAH. Stops for a second. Tries again: WAAAH...
WAAAH... WAAAH.

BACK TO SCENE

The car door opens and out steps a MEXICAN GARDENER, 40s. He glances at a sign on the window -- \$2500 -- hands Patty the keys. She smiles politely.

GARDENER
(Spanish, subtitled)
How long has it been sitting here?

Patty looks at the Boy.

BOY
My father wants to know how long since
you've driven the car.

PATTY
I've never driven it.

BOY
(Spanish, subtitled)
She doesn't drive, Papa.

GARDENER
(Spanish, subtitled)
Then her husband, how long since he's driven
it?

BOY
Does your husband drive?

PATTY
No... my husband died last November.

BOY
(Spanish, subtitled)
He doesn't drive, either, Papa.

The Gardener debates, pulls out a wad of bills.

GARDENER
(Spanish, subtitled)
Twenty-four, fifty!

BOY

He'll give you twenty-four fifty, and keep fifty for a battery.

Patty's smile widens -- we can see her teeth.

PATTY

The price is twenty-five hundred.

BOY

(Spanish, subtitled)

She's a stubborn old mule, Papa, and she says you should go suck eggs. Let's leave.

INT. PATTY'S GARAGE

At a table with a cash box, sits CANDY (21), folding shirts. Dramatic in jeans and red velvet, with rings on every finger, Candy would be a real sweetie, if it weren't for her temper.

In the b.g. an ancient radio blares -

RADIO ANNOUNCER (o.S.)

All of us here at KCJQ decided we're tired of global warming, and all our rain going down to California! So here's a little tune, to help bring on the rain!

A big band rendition of "SINGING IN THE RAIN" plays, as Candy watches Patty stride up the driveway, into the garage.

CANDY

No sale, Grammy?

PATTY

Twenty-four fifty. Hah!

CANDY

But that's only --

PATTY

(interrupting)

Fifty dollars! And that buys twenty-five loaves of bread, fifty video rentals at the library, or a hundred bus-trips to town.

Patty furiously folds clothes -- obviously her husband's.

PATTY

I won't give Grampa's car away to the first person who waves cash in my face.

CANDY

Okay.

PATTY

He worked hard to provide a good living for your mother and me. And just because he's dead, I'm not gonna start taking him for granted!

CANDY

Geez, Grammy -- mellow out.

Patty pastes her polite smile onto her face and leers at Candy. Candy starts to giggle, then frowns. She stands, disappears through the kitchen door, hand over her stomach.

Patty watches, as VOMITING NOISES come from the kitchen. Her look of concern slowly changes to a look of recognition.

EXT. FRONTAGE ROAD, NEXT TO A FREEWAY

The two-lane highway is deserted, except for a classic pink Mustang convertible, full of shopping bags.

EXT. ROSE'S MUSTANG CONVERTIBLE

A 1950's hit blares out of the radio of this beat up old deathtrap. A nicely-preserved mantrap, ROSE -- 70, sexy, and single -- sits behind the wheel and sings:

ROSE

"Bees'll make you bumpy, and mumps'll make you lumpy, and chicken pox'll make you jump an' twi-itch, uh!"

KABOOM! An explosion rips through the car. Rose guides the car to the side of the road.

ROSE

Ohhhhhh -- don't do this to me, Pony Boy. Not again.

She gets out, props open the hood, and poses, shapely leg well displayed. A beat, then two cars whiz by.

ROSE

Well, thanks a lot.

She undoes three buttons on her blouse, poses again.

A van with lettering -- I'M PLUMB NUTS! -- slows down, pulls over. Out steps a GRUBBY PLUMBER, 40s, in overalls. He ejaculates a stream of chewing tobacco onto the ground, waits.

Rose regards her rescuer -- ugh -- then turns on the charm.

ROSE
I don't know what's wrong. My trusty steed never lets me down.

GRUBBY
You need a ride, or somethin'?

ROSE
You're so kind.

She leans inside her car, hands Grubby three gigantic Macy's bags. Grabs some Penney's bags for herself, giggles.

ROSE
Never pass up a bargain!

GRUBBY
I don't got room for all this stuff. I'm full up with toilets.

She scurries to her trunk, opens it, crams the bags inside, looks up, spies a police car down the road, and waves.

ROSE
Yoo hoo!

The police car slows down, stops. Help has arrived.

EXT. A NEWER, SPANISH-STYLE HOME

A modern house, with a Toyota pick-up in the driveway. The truck bed is full: with boxes, floral arrangements, a full-length mirror, a pink loveseat, and a mountain of clothes.

RUTH -- 25, studious and mousy-looking -- rounds the corner of the house, carrying negligees on hangers -- definitely not her style. She hefts them on top of the clothes, plops a high-heeled boot on top, disappears back around the corner.

A tow truck pulls up at the curb, towing Rose's Mustang. Rose exits the tow truck, spies the pick up and stares at it, while behind her, the OPERATOR (20s)

unloads the Mustang.

Automatically, Rose hands the Operator her credit card.

In shock, Rose looks at the house, where KIMBERLY (43) emerges and stands in the front doorway -- murderously calm.

KIMBERLY

You don't live here anymore.

Rose's jaw drops.

KIMBERLY

That doesn't mean I don't love you, because I do. But everyone has to grow up sometime, Mother, and now is your time.

ROSE

What!? No! Kimberly, please, I promise --

KIMBERLY

I found you a house, and I paid three months' rent to get you started. After that, you're on your own.

(smiles)

No more loans, and no more fights.

Ruth rounds the corner of the house, carrying a cat cage. She sees Rose, stops. A sheepish smile.

KIMBERLY

Ruth will help you move.

RUTH

Hello, Nana.

Rose stares at the Toyota pick-up, incredulous.

KIMBERLY

It's all in there.

ROSE

I'm your mother -- you can't do this to me!

KIMBERLY

You'll thank me when you're older, Mother. Goodbye.

She opens the front door.

ROSE
Wait! My car, it's not --

THUD! The door closes and the deadbolt SLAMS into place.

INT. RUTH'S TOYOTA PICK-UP

Ruth drives and Rose is at shotgun -- a fluffy Himalayan cat clutched against her bosom. This is HONEYBUNS, the cat with an attitude. His look says, "Good grief, here we go again."

ROSE
I've never done anything to deserve this kind of treatment!

Ruth bites her tongue -- ouch! Then stops at a light.

ROSE
It was hard enough on me when Eddie... and Geoffrey... then Rudolph... Bruno... even Vladymir turned on me.
(glares at Ruth)
But my own flesh and blood!

INT. PATTY'S HOUSE - THE KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM combo

THE KITCHEN

photos of Candy at all ages -- some with Patty and GRAMPA -- line the walls.

Patty sits at her dinette set, facing cigar boxes labeled MORTGAGE, UTILITIES, HOUSEHOLD, GIFTS, CLOTHES, SAVINGS, and MAD MONEY. The Mortgage lid is open.

Next to it is the garage sale cash box, and bills stacked in piles -- 50s, 20s, 10s, etc. Patty collects bills from the stacks, counts -

PATTY
... two hundred, three hundred. And twenty, forty, sixty. Seventy. And one, two, three, four, and...

She reaches into the cash box and picks out -

PATTY
... seventy six cents.

Pleased, she deposits \$374.76 into her Mortgage Box

and shuts the lid. Then opens the Utilities box and turns back to her money. A sound -- RIBBIT? RIBBIT? -- startles her.

PATTY
Godzelda!

She turns to an aquarium on top of a nearby stand. Inside is one-half water, one-half mossy land. Froggy heaven.

A huge green frog -- GODZELDA -- sits on a rock, gazes up at Patty. Gives her a "poor little me" look. RIBBIT? RIBBIT?

PATTY
I am so sorry, Godzelda.

She pops the lid, puts her hand in, and the frog hops aboard.

Patty carries Godzelda to the kitchen, deposits her in a huge plastic tub and mists her with water. She takes TWO CRICKETS out of a plastic cage and drops them in the tub, then rolls plastic mesh over the top.

PATTY
There. That oughta make you happy.

Godzelda eyes a cricket and licks her lips. Yum!

Candy enters from the garage, hefting a large box.

PATTY
Candy! You shouldn't be lifting -- not in your condition.

The truth is out -- Candy bursts into tears.

MINUTES LATER, IN THE LIVING ROOM -

A comfortable, outdated room, with that cozy, lived-in look. Candy sits in a worn recliner, mug of tea in hand, eyes red.

Opposite her is Patty -- settled on the sofa, surrounded by the newspaper, the mail, and magazines. Her feet up on the coffee table, she sips her tea and listens to Candy:

CANDY
I'm going to keep my baby, and I'm going to

give it a happy home.

PATTY

Course you are. And your boyfriend...?

CANDY

Rex doesn't know -- he wouldn't even give a rip! His stupid band is more important to him than I am.

(tears up)

I don't even know where Rex is.

PATTY

Oh, not good. How will you...

CANDY

... pay for everything? I don't know!

PATTY

Oh, not good. But even if you find your "musician friend" and get some child support, your baby's still going to need a father, Candy Cane.

Candy rolls her eyes. Patty carries over a box of tissues, pats Candy's head, sits back down on the sofa. Candy blows her nose.

CANDY

Yow! What are these made out of -- cactus spikes?

(then)

It's not like I can't get a better job. I can sing, I can cook, and I'm a really good seamstress.

PATTY

You don't need a better job, you need a husband!

She picks up the classified ads and scans the listings.

CANDY

What are you doing?

PATTY

Finding you a husband.

CANDY

It's finally happened, you've lost your mind.

PATTY

Betty Thompson answered an ad in the paper
and landed a husband in three months, flat.

CANDY
(stands)
A woman does not need a man to make her
happy.

PATTY
I wasn't thinking about you.

CANDY
I'm going home.

EXT. PATTY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Candy emerges from the front door, Patty on her heels.

PATTY
A good mother always puts the needs of her
child ahead of her own.

Candy looks to her left, at

THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR

and sees Ruth's Toyota pick-up parked in the driveway.
The cat cage sits on the ground, by the pick-up.

At the curb is a VW Bug, painted in pink and white
flowers.

Rose and Ruth circle the Bug, peer inside.

CANDY
Hello! That's my car!

Rose and Ruth look over at Candy.

CANDY
Are you moving in?

Four steps, and Ruth's in Patty's front yard.

RUTH
Not me -- but my grandmother is.

Rose walks over, oozes charm.

ROSE
How do you do?
(looks over at Patty)
Say, do I know you?

Patty's smile fades.

She stares at Rose for a beat, then descends the steps, slowly circles around Rose and looks her up and down.

PATTY

My... God.

ROSE

(a nervous laugh)

I guess maybe I do know you.

PATTY

Of all the neighborhoods, in all the towns,
in all the world -- you move into mine.
I've waited a long time for this day -- Rose
Brown.

ROSE

Brown? I haven't heard that last name
since....

(stares at Patty)

Oh my Lord!

(turns to Ruth)

Ruthie, we're leaving.

She heads for the Toyota.

PATTY

Coward!

Rose stops. Marches back. Gets in Patty's face -

ROSE

I may be a lot of things, Patricia Thomas,
but there is one thing I am not, and that's
a coward!

PATTY

Maybe I should have said, "Slut."

ROSE

I'll take that as a compliment. Coming from
a woman who couldn't keep a man in her
bedroom, if he were hogtied to the bedpost!

PATTY

Take that back!

ROSE

Never!

It's almost a chick-fight -- but Candy holds Patty back, and Ruth grabs onto Rose.

cANDY Ruth
Grammy! Nana!

cANDY
Mellow out!

Ruth stares up at Patty's front door, horrorstruck.

RUTH
Bad kitty -- no! Bad kitty -- bad!

Up on Patty's front stoop, stands Honeybuns, with Godzelda gently clamped beneath his teeth. The frog's legs and arms wiggle pathetically, and she looks as if she's about to croak.

ROSE
Honeybuns! Stop that this instant!

PATTY
Honeybuns?? Honeybuns!! I might have known that would be your cat!

ROSE
Oh, shut up and help me rescue your damn toad.

PATTY
She's not a toad, she's a frog!

ROSE
(to the others)
Here, form a ring so he can't escape.

They do so, and advance toward Honeybuns, arms outstretched. He darts back into the house, with four women in hot pursuit.

INT. PATTY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Four women pile into the entry way, and Rose slams the front door shut. BANG! A pane of glass breaks.

Patty points at Rose -

PATTY
Homewrecker!

Honeybuns races into

THE LIVING ROOM

and darts behind the recliner.

Ruth gives chase, trips over a throw rug. KABOOM!
She slams into a curio cabinet. CRASH!

EXT. PATTY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A Hummer wagon with Texas plates -- TXS BBQ -- pulls into the driveway on the other side of Patty's house. It's loaded up with boxes, suitcases, and enough little-girl toys to open up a store. Two men and a young girl get out.

CRASH! The sound of breaking glass comes from Patty's house.

Alarmed, STERLING -- 60s, silver-haired, amiable -- looks over at Patty's house, then back at the Hummer's driver, LANCE -- 32, studly, and Texan. A look passes between them.

STERLING
Patty's in trouble!

LANCE
(to the young girl)
Ya'all stay right here with Peepaw, honey.
Daddy's gonna go help Miss Patty. Back in a
minute, baby.

Lance reaches under the driver's seat, extracts an old-fashioned six-shooter, and hustles up to Patty's front door.

INT. PATTY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lance opens the front door and steals

INSIDE THE ENTRY WAY,

six-shooter cocked and ready. He follows RIOT NOISES

DOWN THE HALLWAY,

past wreckage from the chase, and throws open a bedroom door.

INSIDE PATTY'S BEDROOM

Four hysterical women stand on a double bed and reach

up for Honeybuns, who perches out of reach on a high shelf and gazes calmly down at the four -- Godzelda in his mouth, wiggling.

LANCE
What the devil...?

Rose SCREAMS, and everybody panics! Until Lance outshouts them all -

LANCE
Quiet!

And all the women freeze.

PATTY
Lance!

LANCE
Nice to see you, Mrs. O'Connor.

He notices his six-shooter, tucks it into his belt.

LANCE
I thought... well, never mind what I thought.

ROSE
You thought she needed help, you wonderful man. I am very happy to meet you. Rose. Rose Poponovitch.

LANCE
Lance Rockman. The pleasure's mine.

Rose shoots her arm out and pulls Ruth over.

ROSE
This is my granddaughter, Ruthie.

RUTH
(correcting)
Ruth.

Lance nods politely.

ROSE
Ruthie spends most of her time studying for the bar exam right now, but she'll be free soon.

Ruth would love to become invisible. Patty steps in front of her, grins.

PATTY
Lance... you remember Candy. It's been a few years since you two have seen each other.

LANCE
(interested)
Howdy, Miss Candy.

CANDY
Howdy, Mr. Lance.

PATTY
She has a very gentle touch.

LANCE
Excuse me?

PATTY
If you can get that God-awful tomcat down, I'm sure Candy can get Godzelda out of his mouth.

LANCE
Yes, Ma'am. We'll try our best.

Patty herds Rose and Ruth out the door, and down to
THE LIVING ROOM
then turns to Rose.

PATTY
If Godzelda dies -- you die!

ROSE
Get your filthy hands off me, Patricia Thomas.

PATTY
Make that O'Connor, please. I was married for forty-two years.

ROSE
Don't think I don't know what you're doing, Patty, because I do -- I saw him first!

PATTY
"I saw him first." Bah! That never stopped you from stealing someone else's man.

ROSE
I never stole.... You lost Eddie, fair and square!

PATTY
Fair and square?! You chased Eddie down and
pounced on him like a man-eating tiger!

ROSE
I never chased a man in my life.

PATTY
Carnivore!

ROSE
It's not my fault if men are attracted to
me.

RUTH
Nana, can we please go unload the truck? I
really need to study tonight.

ROSE
And leave Honeybuns in this madhouse?

She heads back to

THE ENTRY WAY/HALLWAY

just as Lance and Candy emerge from the bedroom.

Lance carries Honeybuns -- so cool, frogs wouldn't
melt in his mouth. And Candy carries Godzelda -- so
dramatic, she should be arrested for over-acting.

PATTY
Godzelda!

ROSE
Honeybuns!

The women scoop up their pets and cradle them like
infants.

ROSE
Oh, Mr. Rockman, I can't thank you enough.

The front door opens, and Sterling pokes his head
inside.

STERLING
Is it safe?

PATTY
Come on in, Sterling -- join the party.

She takes Godzelda into

THE KITCHEN

where she rinses the frog under the faucet, places her

back in the aquarium and watches as Godzelda hops in the water and relaxes -- safe. RIBBIT? RIBBIT? Patty sighs with relief.

Sterling leads DOLLY, 4, by the hand and into

THE LIVING ROOM,

and "the party" follows. Dolly could be Shirley Temple's twin sister -- the evil one.

DOLLY

Daddy! You said you'd be back in a minute, and you've been gone hours.

LANCE

Daddy's sorry, sweetheart. I was helping this nice lady with her kitty. But I'm leaving, now.

ROSE

Oh, but you haven't introduced us.

LANCE

Beg pardon, ma'am. My father, Sterling, and my little girl, Dolly.

Rose smiles at Sterling, then stoops down to Dolly.

ROSE

Would you like to pet my kitty, sweetie ?

DOLLY

No.

ROSE

But we're going to be neighbors.

DOLLY

No we're not.

STERLING

You'll be my neighbor, Missus, ah --

ROSE

Rose... Miss Rose.

Rose stands, gives Sterling a 2,000 megawatt smile.

ROSE

Would you like to pet my kitty?

PATTY
God, I may vomit.

Candy

hustles down the hall to the bathroom and SLAMS the door, but it doesn't muffle the sound of her VOMITING.

EXT. ROSE'S HOUSE

Lance and Sterling carry the pink loveseat up Rose's walkway.

Rose stands in the front door, thinks aloud -

ROSE
That won't fit in my bedroom.

The men stop.

ROSE
Maybe it should go in the storage shed.

They turn around, head for the shed.

ROSE
On second thought....

INT. ROSE'S HOUSE

A tiny living room. Ruth kneels by a box of PHOTOS of Rose and herself -- at all ages, with many different men. She lifts a photo of a younger Rose, standing next to a swarthy, GYPSY-LIKE MAN. He carries a FIVE-YEAR-OLD, GRINNING RUTHIE on his shoulders.

Rose enters, followed by Lance, Sterling, and the loveseat.

RUTH
Nana, where's Rudolph these days? I always liked Rudolph.

ROSE
I can't remember... France? Or was it San Francisco. Someplace like that.

She shoves two boxes aside to make room for the loveseat, and the guys put it down -- OOF!

STERLING
That's the last of the lot, Rose.

ROSE

Wonderful! Ruthie's going out for Chinese.
Won't you stay?

STERLING
Thanks, Rose, but Patty always cooks my
dinner, and tonight she's cooking for Lance
and Dolly, too.

ROSE
She is? She does?

STERLING
It's a good arrangement. She doesn't drive,
and I don't cook.
(extends his hand)
Welcome to the neighborhood, Rose.

Rose forces a smile.

INT. PATTY'S HOUSE - THE KITCHEN/living room -
NIGHT

THE KITCHEN

Candy sets the table for dinner, while Sterling stands
nearby and watches Patty wrap a hunk of meatloaf in
tin foil.

She's getting Sterling's dinner ready to send home
with him.

STERLING
He says he came here to start Texas Barbecue
in California, but I think he came out,
lookin' for a wife.

Patty turns to Sterling, all smiles.

PATTY
Why don't you and Lance eat here, tonight?

In the b.g., Candy rolls her eyes.

LATER

Lance, Sterling, Candy, Patty, and Dolly finish eating
dinner at the kitchen table. Animated, Lance explains
to Candy -

LANCE
The secret of good barbecue...

He checks out the window, under the table, then
whispers -

LANCE
... is to keep the fire real low, then smoke
your meat all day long.

CANDY
I'll make sure and remember that.

DOLLY
I hate meatloaf!

LANCE
Dolly, Mrs. O'Connor made this special, just
for us.

Dolly makes a face -- yuck! Lance turns to Patty.

LANCE
Could I trouble you for some jam?

Patty gets some strawberry jam.

LANCE
Thank you kindly.

He spreads a spoonful on top of Dolly's meatloaf.
Dolly looks at Lance, waits. Another spoonful, and
she eats.

STERLING
That's my baby.

DOLLY
I'm not a baby. I'm four years old!

Laughter. Dolly scowls, throws her fork on the floor.

Candy makes a goofy face at Dolly. Dolly stares up at
her, fascinated. Candy picks up the fork, puts it on
the table.

PATTY
If barbecue is so easy, then why isn't
everybody else successful, like you?

LANCE
I did some research on that -- choked down
some of the worst barbecue in the state of
Texas. Folks just won't take the time to
make it all soft, and tender...
(smiles at Candy)
... and juicy.

From outside the window -

ROSE (O.S.)
Yoo hoo!

STERLING
Did you hear something?

Patty pulls a cord -- the mini blinds fall with a
CLUNK.

PATTY
Owls!

ROSE (O.S.)
Yoo hoo!

Rose peeks around the corner -- from the entryway,
into the kitchen.

ROSE
I didn't want to disturb you-all, so I just
let myself in.
(to Patty)
I do hope you don't mind.

PATTY
Why should I mind?

Rose enters, carrying a boxed pie. Behind her comes
Ruth, carrying a pot of coffee. She is mortified.

ROSE
I just couldn't let these two men get away,
without thanking them for their services.
How's your toad?

PATTY
Frog.

ROSE
Good. Who wants coffee?

Rose puts the pie down, takes the coffee pot from
Ruth.

STERLING
I'm always ready for a good cuppa Joe.

ROSE
My kinda man!

Patty looks at Rose, looks at Sterling. Then it dawns
on her:

STERLING IS A MAN!

and Rose is after him.

Suddenly casual, Patty turns to Rose -

PATTY
Rose, why don't you take the coffee into the living room, and let me serve the pie?

ROSE
You are such a love.

Patty puts coffee cups on a tray, hands the tray to Candy, then everyone except Patty moves into

THE LIVING ROOM

ROSE
(to Sterling)
You know, Patty and I go way back.

STERLING
Is that right?

ROSE
We've been friends, ever since we were girls.

STERLING
I wonder why she never mentioned you.

ROSE
Oh, you know how hard it is to stay in touch, nowadays.

BACK IN THE KITCHEN

Patty takes the pie -- a banana cream -- over to a hidden corner, then douses it liberally with SALT.

PATTY
Maybe this'll put you back in touch, Rosie baby.

end of excerpt