

Spring 2013

Grandma's Dictionary

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Repository Citation

Jeremiah, Leiquan, "Grandma's Dictionary" (2013). *Academic Symposium of Undergraduate Scholarship*. 22.
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~A Leiquan L. Jeremiah Original~

Credits:

Performance: 7 February 2013

Stage Manager

Leiquan Jeremiah

Lighting Designer

Leiquan Jeremiah

Sound Engineer

Leiquan Jeremiah

Costume Designer

Leiquan Jeremiah



"Not everything can be easily defined...."



<http://www.epa.gov/glla/grandcal/images/grdcal-cell6-after-201111.jpg>

Act 1:

We are introduced to the Baileys who live in a modest neighborhood in Gary, Indiana. The family has lived in the same house for generations.

Grandma Athena is the family glue and holds true to her role. She serves as a mediator and voice of reason for family and friends.

Cecile is the main voice of the play who finds herself learning about different people and their lives by being at the right place at the right time. Besides her bold listening in, she loves to tell people's stories.

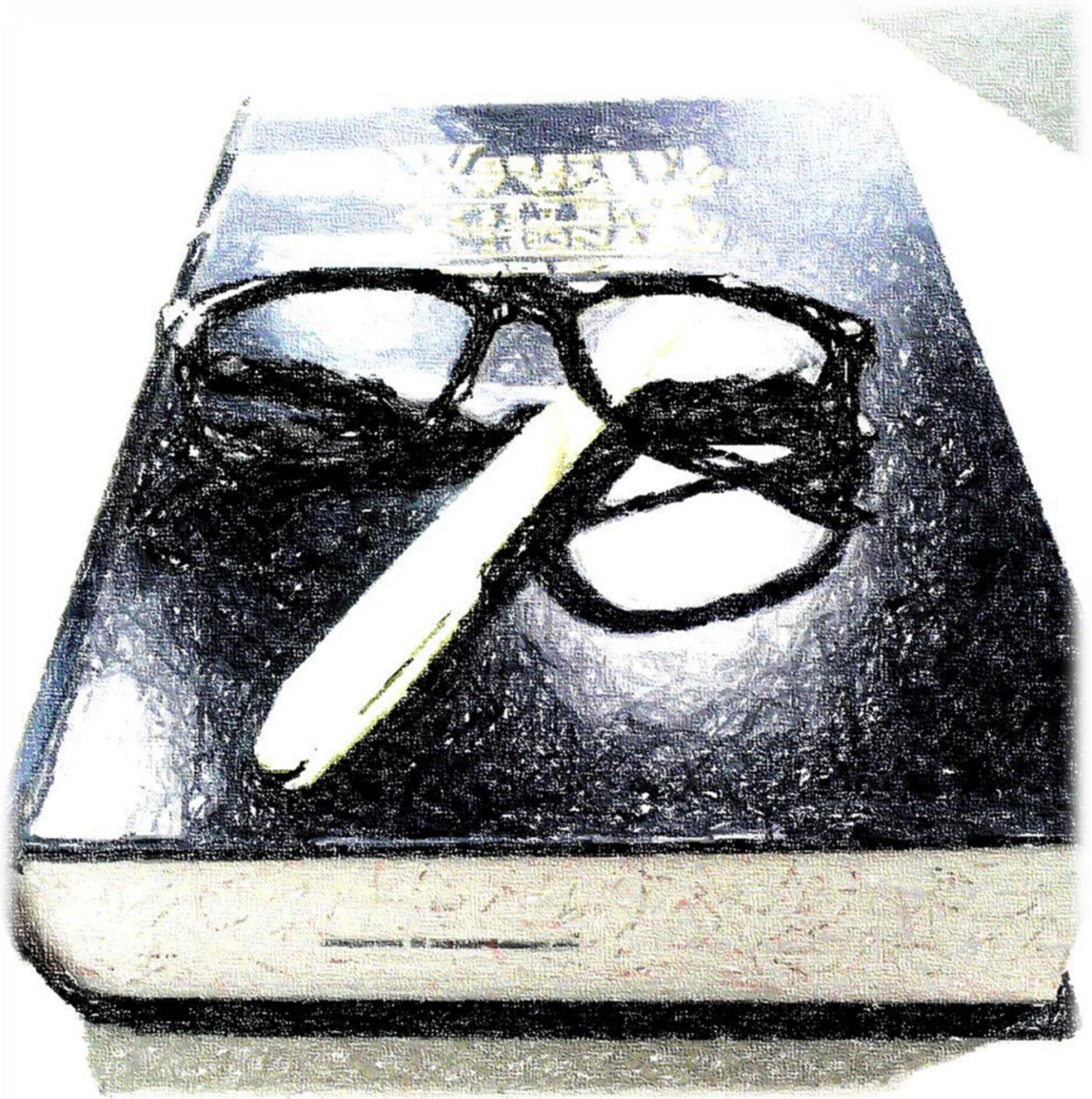
Susie-Ann is Cecile's long-time, childhood friend. Susie-Ann lives in a house with her mother, sister, and abusive father.

Cast of Characters:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Athena Bailey | "Grandma Athena." Lives in the Bailey household. Full of wisdom and advice. |
| Cecile Bailey | Vivacious 16 year-old teen who seeks and shares gossip throughout the play. |
| Susie-Ann Hendricks | Troubled 16 year-old teen who is friends with Cecile, but has a hard time coping with troubles at home. |
| Grandpa Stillman Bailey | Meditative husband of Athena Bailey. |
| Emily Bailey | Living disciplinary in the household after the death of her mother. |
| Ray Bailey | Father figure of the Bailey household. |
| Jessie Bailey | Older brother of Cecile. Reveals love for Susie-Ann. |
| Miss Susie Pulman | Cecile's 6 th grade teacher who listens to her crazy stories after the passing of Cecile's grandmother. |
| Obie Duggard | Youngest of the Duggard Brothers. Causes a lot of mischief and encourages Susie-Ann's poor behavior. |
| Ellie-Marie Hendricks | Younger sister of Susie-Ann. Victim to father's personal struggle and is claimed as a punching bag for Susie-Ann. |
| Mama Hendricks | Single mother struggling to take care of her two daughters: Susie-Ann and Ella-Marie. |

Grandma's Dictionary

~A Leiquan L. Jeremiah Original~



“Not everything can be easily defined....”

*Performance: 7 February 2013
John Hazen White Building-Johnson & Wales University*

Ro-Ro-Ra-Rote, Rote-tun-d. R-rote-tund. Rotund. Grandma Athena, these words are crazy!

Let's see...(flips through the dictionary).

“Adjective; Round or rounded out; plump or stout 2. Full-toned; sonorous [a rotund voice] – rotundity, or rotundness, rotundly.”

Wow, sometimes I feel like the definitions don't do a thing for me. I mean, I know what Ro-tund means, but what is “Sonorous,” supposed to mean? (flips through dictionary)

“Sonorous- Producing or capable of producing sound, esp. sound of full, deep, or rich quality; resonant.” (giggles)

Oh, “resonant,” I remember that one! Member grandma, when you was tellin' me about how “resonantly Grandpa Stillman snores?” (chuckles) Grandma, you said, “Chile, he snores so bad, he gon' go an' wake up everybody here in the house.” (pause)

Grandpa and you is probably in Heaven talking to God. I always wanted to know what I would be doing if I came up there. I know I can't visit, but I just miss you so much Grandma Athena.

I miss when you-- when you brushed my hair and called me Princess Cecile. The more you told me, the more that I believed you. And even if I didn't quite understand why you would even use such kind words to describe by tangled and matted plaits and trying hairstyles, I know that you

were not lying. For whatever reason, you believed that I was and always will be beautiful.

(closes dictionary and shifts position).

I remember wanting kinky curls that bounced when I walked and shined in the sunlight. I wanted them to be long and to my shoulders so that I could fit all of my hairs in a ponytail just like Susie-Ann's....

You remember Susie-Ann, don't you? I used to play with her after church on Sundays and who knows what we did to pass time. We made mud pies and decorated them with flowers. We tried to have lemonade stands but by the time that a Misses or a Mister would try to buy some, we would have already drank nearly the entire batch. And Mama would roll her eyes and swing her hips around when we protested and asked for some more lemonade supplies. (imitating Mama) She would say, "I done told you little girls that you won't be making any money if you consume your whole crop." She told us the same thing every single time.

So one night I went into your room and asked you, "What does 'consume,' mean?" Remember that night? When it was summertime and every day of that week was so was so muggy and hot! You wore your white sundress with the lace on the sleeves. All of that day you rocked in your chair and used your Sunday service fan to keep cool. You only had one cup of lemonade, and though I know that you wanted one other one, you left the sweet refreshments for Susie-Ann and I.(shakes head) Anyways, you were impressed that I could remember such a different word; frankly, so was I...(pauses and then chuckles)

You remember the time that Susie-Ann and I were playing in the Mud Room just trying on all of the shoes in the closet. I had on Daddy's and then I was trying to be jest like him. I stood up tall and threw on his big old trench coat! And I found his pipe in the front breast pocket.

(impersonating Daddy) So to top off my impersonation, I pursed it between my lips and blew fake smoke clouds. One, after the other. Susie-Ann was in stitches! Ohh! That girl snorted and hollered so loud that you came looking to see just what trouble we were making. And you looked into my eyes and I thought that you was about to beat the fool outta' me Grandma. I thought that you would hit me so hard that I'd feel it through the coat, through my Sunday dress AND my tights. I swore that I would have felt it in my bones (pause).

Susie-Ann wasn't laughing no more after that because she was afraid that it would be her turn next. So, she threw off Jessie's beat up basketball sneakers so quickly that she tipped herself over. She fell into the mop bucket and couldn't get herself outta' that thing! (chuckles) Then it was my turn to laugh. You giggled too (pause).

You couldn't ever stay mad for too long. You helped poor Susie-Ann out of that dirty old bucket and told me to stop laughing. I don't know why I was so afraid that day. (long pause, picks up dictionary)

So back to my words... (looks up into the distance) I only have but a minute before it gets too dark out here. Last time I came home after the streetlights had turned on, mama grounded me for the entire following week. That was the week of the Spring dance and everybody got to go 'cept me. Susie-Ann tried to convince me that it was not that impressive, but I know for a fact that

Billie Cunningham, the cutest boy in our grade, was in the outside gallery kissing on some fast little girl. Oh! I wish that that boy would notice us other girls! Susie-Ann would kill me for telling you this Grandma, but she got her some man too! Right-on-the lips. He kissed her right on the lips. WITH HIS LIPS. (leans in) Don't tell her I spilled the beans though Grandma.

Anyway, my next word came from class. We are reading *Of Mice and Men* in English and came about describing a scene that we were to read about tonight for homework. Misses Paulman was saying how "appalling," Lennie's behavior was when he went and killed some poor woman.

Now, I know that you told me to use my context clues and figure some things out for myself, but Miss Paulman *kills me* with that (exaggerate accent) dang ol' country accent that she's got! So, I am just guna look up all that words around and near what I think that she said. (clears throat and opens dictionary).

Okay, so "appalling.". Let see what we can find... (looks through dictionary) Here we go!

"Appal. A-P-P-A-L. Make someone feel horror and dismay. Very bad." (looks around innocently). Speaking of 'making someone feel horror and dismay,' I have something I need to talk to you about. (closes dictionary and lays it aside)

Susie Ann don't talk to me anymore. She always busy with her boyfriend. You are going to die all over when I tell you who he is...Obie. Obie Duggard. Yep, the youngest of the Duggard's and therefore he learned more than he needed to from his brothers and not enough from school. Let us just say that I am surprised that he doesn't get lost every time he blinks (pause). They are such

bullies at school, those boys. They just pick on and toss around whoever they please. And dare you say one thing to one of them, the other two will be right behind their brother ready to throw punches or worse.

I done told her to leave that boy alone. She don't listen though. And now, she is too far gone. She turned into a tough one herself. She has been having a hard time since her daddy killed himself. At least he wasn't around to hit her and her sister no more.

Says she felt guilty. Like, it was her fault. Her fault for being born and getting in the way. Her daddy was a crazy drunk—no getting around that. The bruises got real bad just before he jumped in the Grand Calumet River.

Either way, she took it really hard. She started drinking from his collection and talking back to her mama. She got into big fights with Ella-Marie. Her own sister. Flesh and blood (exhales).

She told me to “Go to Hell,” one night when I called her because she hadn't been at school for a few days. I was just trying to help, but she didn't want it. So, I left that girl alone.

She drinks down by the river where her daddy drowned. Talking to herself and crying. (throws up hands) That girl is soo loud! But you can't tell her nothing. She acts like she is the only one hurting. What about her mama who done lost her crazy, drunk, reckless husband and had him replaced by a crazy, drunk, reckless daughter? Poor woman.

And Ella-Marie was just trying to go on with Middle school and move on from the past and all of the hurt. She can't when Susie-Ann keeps beating on her. Right at the bus stop one day, Susie-Ann walked up to Ella Marie—drunk as a skunk.(rolls eyes) She started babbling something about her thinking that she was “too good to be bad.” How she hated her for being prettier and smarter. She spat on Ella-Marie's new school shoes and said she was helping her to ‘shine’ them when the crossing guard tried to defend innocent little ten-year-old Ella. That little girl is strong. Just kicked some dirt over the spit, rubbed her shoe along some grass, and went to school as if they were still, “as good as new.”

I thought that “Rotund,” could have something to do with Susie-Ann and her behavior. Cycling and repeating her father's mistakes. I guess everything can be put in the dictionary though.

Grandma, I know you told me that I need to learn to keep my mouth shut and to mind my business, but how am I supposed to when I want to protect everyone. You used to be around to help us all talk out our problems. Mama tries, but she just has been so busy with her new job at the town hall lately.

I try to talk to Jessie about things like school and boys, but he just wants to keep talking about Susie-Ann! I feel like it's never enough to just want to converse and talk about regular everyday stuff. If it isn't no(symbolys quotes with hands) “big issue,” then it is forgotten. We use small words every single day, but when we try to incorporate the bigger words, then people feel all intimidated.

Opposites. I'm going to look that one up. (opens dictionary) "Contrary or radically different in some respect common to both, as in nature, qualities, direction, result, or significance; opposed." That is all true I guess, but I am starting to feel like I need to do something crazy or extravagant. (stresses word) *Something* to get a little love in this town. I just can't see myself doing all the things that Susie-Ann does; That is just too risky.

I have started reading books and stuff to pass time. I think that I want to be a writer. Not the fiction kind though Grandma Athena. (begins to cry)

(begins to rain and the sun is setting)(in the distance, Jessie's figure begins to get closer) I want to write about people's lives. Get stories out there so that people don't feel so alone. Feel alone like I do sometimes. You were my best friend. Not Susie-Ann.

I think also that the stories may help people not go down the dark roads. (pause, wipes tears) To look at life for what it is worth. Start using the dictionary more and stop interpreting things with such a critical eye. Making all of these extravagant, sorrowful situations out of light ones. I guess that I am being judgmental, but from the outside cover, things seem so contained and straight forward.

Here lies Athena Bailey