**“Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow” by Kurt Vonnegut**

**Part II**

Lou and Emerald stayed fearfully awake almost all night, waiting to see what Gramps was going to do. But not a sound came from the sacred bedroom. At two hours before dawn, the pair dropped off to sleep.

At six o’clock they arose again, for it was time for their generation to eat breakfast in the kitchenette. No one spoke to them. They had twenty minutes in which to eat, but their reflexes were so dulled by the bad night that they had hardly swallowed two mouthfuls of egg-type processed seaweed before it was time to surrender their places to their son’s generation.

Then, as was the custom for whomever had been most recently disinherited, they began preparing Gramps’ breakfast, which would presently be served to him in bed, on a tray. They tried to be cheerful about it. The toughest part of the job was having to handle the … eggs and bacon and oleomargarine on which Gramps spent almost all of the income from his fortune.

“Well,” said Emerald, “I’m not going to get all panicky until I’m sure there’s something to be panicky about.”

“Maybe he doesn’t know what it was I busted,” said Lou hopefully.

“Probably thinks it was your watch crystal,” said Eddie their son, who was toying apathetically with his buckwheat-type processed sawdust cakes.

“Don’t get sarcastic with your father,” said Em, “and don’t talk with your mouth full, either.”

“I’d like to see anybody take a mouthful of this stuff and *not* say something,” said Eddie, who was seventy-three. He glanced at the clock. “It’s time to take Gramps his breakfast, you know.”

“Yeah, it is, isn’t it,” said Lou weakly. He shrugged. Let’s have the tray, Em.”

“We’ll both go.”

Walking slowly, smiling bravely, they found a large semicircle of long-faced Schwartzes standing around the bedroom door.

Em knocked. “Gramps,” she said brightly, “breakfast is ready.”

There was no reply, and she knocked again, harder.

The door swung open before her fist. In the middle of the room, the soft, deep, wide, canopied bed, the symbol of the sweet by-and-by to every Schwartz, was empty.

A sense of death, as unfamiliar to the Schwartzes as Zoroastrianism or the causes of the Sepoy Mutiny, stilled every voice and slowed every heart. Awed, the heirs began to search gingerly under the furniture and behind the drapes for all that was mortal of Gramps, father of the race.

But Gramps had left not his earthly husk, but a note, which Lou finally found on the dresser, under a paperweight which was a treasured souvenir from the 2000 World’s Fair. Unsteadily, Lou read it aloud:

“’Somebody wo I have sheltered and protected and taught the best I know how all these years last night turned on me like a mad dog and diluted my anti-gerasone, or tried to. I am no longer a young man. I can no longer bear the crushing burden of life as I once could. So, after last night’s bitter experience, I say goodbye. The cares of this world will soon drop away like a cloak of thorns, and I shall know peace. By the time you find this, I will be gone.’”

“Gosh,” said Willy, brokenly, “he didn’t even get to see how the Five-Hundred-Mile Speedway Race was going to come out.”

“Or the World’s Series,” said Eddie.

“Or whether Mrs. McGarvey got her eyesight back,” said Morty.

“There’s more,” said Lou, and he began reading aloud again: “I, Harold D. Schwartz … do hereby make, publish and declare this to be my last Will and Testament, hereby revoking any and all former wills and codicils by me at any time heretofore made.’”

“No!” cried Willy, “Not another one!”

“’I do stipulate,’” read Lou, “’That all of my property, of whatsoever kind and nature, not be divided, but do devise and bequeath it to be held in common by my issue, without regard for generation, equally, share and share alike.’”

“Issue?” said Emerald.

Lou included the multitude in a sweep of his hand. “It means we all own the whole … shootin’ match.”

All eyes turned instantly to the bed.

“Share and share alike?” said Morty.

“Actually,” said Willy, who was the oldest person present, “it’s just like the old system, where the oldest people head up things with their headquarters in here, and – “

“I like *that!*” said Em. “Lou owns as much of it s you do, and I say it ought to be for the oldest one who’s still working. You can snooze around here all day, waiting for your pension check, and poor Lou stumbles in here after work, all tuckered out, and –“

“How about letting somebody who’s never had any privacy get a little crack at it?” said Eddie hotly. “… you old people had plenty of privacy back when you were kids. I was born and raised in the middle of the … barracks in the hall! How about –“

“Yeah?” said Morty, “Sure, you’ve all had it pretty tough, and my heart bleeds for you. But try honeymooning in the hall for real kick.”

“Silence!” shouted Willy imperiously, “The next person who opens his mouth spends the next six months by the bathroom. Now clear out of my room. I want to think.”

A vase shattered against the wall, inches above his head. In the next moment, a free-for-all was underway, with each couple battling to eject every other couple from the rom. Fighting coalition formed and dissolved with the lightning changes of the tactical situation. Em and Lou were thrown into the hall, where they organized others in the same situation, and stormed back into the room.

After two hours of struggle, with nothing like a decision in sight, the cops broke in.

For the next half-hour, patrol wagons and ambulances hauled away Schwartzes, and the apartment was still and spacious.

An hour later, films of the last stages of the riot were being televised to 500,000,000 delighted viewers on the Eastern Seaboard.

In the stillness of the three-room Schwartz apartment on the 76th floor of Building 257, the television set had been left on. Once more the air was filled with the cries and grunts and crashes of the fray, coming harmlessly now from the loudspeaker.

The battle also appeared on the screen of the television set in the police station, where the Schwartzes and their captors watched with professional interest.

Em and Lou were in adjacent four-by-eight cells, and were stretched out peacefully on their cots.

“Em – “ called Lou through the partition, “you got a washbasin all your own, too?”

“Sure. Washbasin, bed, light – the works. Ha! And we thought Gramp’s room was something. How long’s this been going on?” She held out her hand. “For the first time in forty years, hon, I haven’t got the shakes.”

“Cross your fingers,” said Lou, “the lawyer’s going to try to get us a year.”

“Gee,” said Em dreamily, “I wonder what kind of wires you’d have to pull to get solitary?”

“All right, pipe down,” said the turnkey, “or I’ll toss the whole kit and caboodle of you right out. And first one who lets on to anybody outside how good jail is ain’t never getting back in!”

The prisoners fell silent.

The living room of the Schwartz apartment darkened for a moment, as the riot scene faded, and then the face of the announcer appeared, like the sun coming from behind a cloud. *“And now, friends,”* he said, *“I have a special message from the makers of anti-gerasone, a message for all you folks over one hundred and fifty. Are you hampered socially by wrinkles, by stiffness of joints and discoloration or loss of hair, all because these things came upon you before anti-gerasone was developed? Well, if you are, you need no longer suffer, need no longer feel different and out of things.*

*“After years of research, medical science has now developed super-anti-gerasone! In weeks, yes weeks, you can look, feel, and act as young as your great-great-grandchildren! Wouldn’t you pay $5,000 to be indistinguishable from everybody else? Well, you don’t have to. Safe, tested super-anti-gerasone costs you only dollars a day. The average cost of regaining all the sparkle and attractiveness of youth is less than fifty dollars.*

*“Write now for your free trial carton. Just put your name and address on a dollar postcard, and mail it to ‘Super,’ Box 500,000, Schenectady, N.Y. Have you got that? I’ll repeat it. ‘Super’ Box…”* Underlining the announcer’s words was the scratching of Gramps’s fountain pen, the one Willy had given him the night before. He had come in a few minutes previous from the Idle Hour Tavern, which commanded a view of Building 257 across the square of asphalt known as the Alden Village Green. He had called a cleaning woman to come straighten the place up, and had hired the best lawyer in town to get his descendants a conviction. Gramps had then moved the daybed before the television screen so that he could watch from a reclining position. It was something that he’d dreamed of doing for years.

“Schen-ec-ta-dy,” mouthed Gramps. “Got it.” His face had changed, remarkably. His facial muscles seemed to have relaxed, revealing kindness and equanimity under what had been taut, bad-tempered lines. It was almost as though his trial package of *Super*-anti-gerasone had already arrived. When something amused him on television, he smiled easily, rather than barely managing to lengthen the thin line of his mouth a millimeter. Life was good. He could hardly wait to see what was going to happen next.

After Reading Questions

1. What passage best captures Gramps personality? Why?
2. If you were in Gramp’s position, would you act any differently?
3. What are the top two examples of **irony** in the text?
4. Pick a word that best describes what this story is about.