



THE GENERATION GAME  
BY  
CHRISSY EVANS

Extract

A SMITH SCRIPT

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# The Generation Game

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**When do your parents turn into your children?  
Does it start when they come to *your* house for Christmas  
for the first time?**

Running time 60 mins

**Characters: Act One  
1973**

**Elizabeth (Beth) Cooper** -38 years old

**Frank Cooper** – 42. Self-made man

**Simon Cooper** – 20 years old. At college doing a business course

**Teressa (Tessa) Cooper** – 16/17 years old. Passionate about animals

**Sally** – 24. Neighbour and daughter of Hazel, Beth's best friend

**Characters: Act Two  
1999 (26 years later)**

**Elizabeth** – now 64 years old beginning to struggle with rheumatoid arthritis

**Frank** – now 68 years old Retired

**Simon** – now 46 years old. Father of 12 yr old twins. Married to Ellie

**Sally** – now 50 years old

**Characters: Act Three  
2016 (16 years later)**

**Tessa** – Simon's sister now 58 years old. Runs an animal sanctuary in Spain

**Simon:** now 62 years old. Has married his “affair” and divorced his wife

**Sally:** - now 66 years old

**Beth** – 80 Still misses her husband who died 8 years before

Writer's Note:

*This play is intended to be performed by a cast of 5 but can be played by any number between 5 and 13.*

# The Generation Game

## Act One

A suburban lounge. Late August 1973

*There is an entrance to the kitchen upstage left and an entrance to the hall and stairs upstage right*

*There is a window at the rear with a dresser or table underneath, on which there is a vase of fresh flowers*

*FRANK is sitting in an armchair, smoking. An ashtray is balanced on the arm of the chair. He is reading a newspaper.*

BETH: *(offstage)*  
I'm back

*BETH enters carrying photos in a packet*

BETH:  
Where is everybody?

FRANK:  
Simon's gone to the off licence to get some "provisions" for the journey back tomorrow. It's only an hour and a half but you'd think he was planning to cross Antarctica

BETH:  
And where's Tessa? I thought she had biology to do tonight?

FRANK:  
Walking old Mr. Clark's bull terrier. *(pause)* Again

BETH:  
We can't get her a dog Frank. I've told her. No dogs I said. You heard me

FRANK:  
I know

*Thuds sound from upstairs. They look up*

FRANK:  
And your mother is learning to pogo upstairs

BETH: *(to Frank)*  
Oh you. *(shouts)*

Coming Mom. *(to FRANK)*. Here's the photos. I picked them up on the way back. There's six of your shoes, one of the sky (or it could have been the sea) and most of rest with no heads but there's one or two of me and Hazel that aren't too bad

FRANK:  
It's this new camera. Top of the range. But I've got the hang of it now

BETH:  
You did better with that old box Brownie. I wonder what happened to it? And those old photos. I know I put them all somewhere safe

*Thuds resume*

BETH: *(shouts)*  
I said I'm coming Mom.

*(BETH exits to hall)*

*FRANK looks at photos, turning them around in puzzlement*

*Door slams as SIMON enters from kitchen*

SIMON:  
Ma not back?

FRANK:  
Upstairs with Cruella da Ville

SIMON: *(laughs too heartily)*  
Good one Pops. Well, I'm glad we have a moment to ourselves

FRANK:  
Hold it right there. I get very nervous when you call me Pops

SIMON;  
No, listen Pops, ..Dad, I just thought it would be good to have a little chat you know man to man, before I go, without the the the..

FRANK:  
Women? Your Mother?

SIMON:  
Yeah, you see it's a bit awkward

FRANK:  
Oh no you don't

SIMON:

Don't what? Really Dad, if you'd just let me finish

FRANK:

I wasn't born yesterday. Just one question Sonny Jim. Is it going to cost me money?

SIMON:

No of course not, well not much and it's more of a loan really. I finish the course in July and then, when I've got a job, I'll be able to pay you back every penny – with interest if you like

FRANK:

No

SIMON:

No what? No you don't want any interest?

FRANK:

No. N...O... No loan, no money

SIMON:

But you don't know what I want it for

FRANK:

And I don't need to know because I already know that, whatever it is, my need is greater than yours

SIMON:

What if I said I won't be able to finish the course. What if I said I might have to move back in with you and Ma?

FRANK:

Nice try but it would a hell of a lot cheaper to change the locks

SIMON:

Look. It's for books. I didn't know how much books on business practise would be. Honest Dad I'll repay you as soon as I start work

FRANK:

That's what you said last time. And, correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe there's such a thing as a college “library” where they keep lots of “books” and students can go and borrow them -for free

SIMON:

Well yeah, but it's not just books

*(BETH enters wiping her hands)*

BETH:

What isn't just books? (*to FRANK*) She's nodded off. I gave her a bit of a wash. I'll take some tea up later

FRANK:

Our first born here wants to "borrow" some money. Again

BETH:

Oh Si-Si. Not again

SIMON:

It's not my fault Ma. Everything costs so much. That piddling little grant doesn't half cover it. I might have to leave and I'm so close to finishing. Then I could get a really good job and look after you and Dad when you get older.... you know...

FRANK:

It's just a suggestion but you could get a part-time job now. You know - a job - one of those things where you do something for somebody else, say clean a few glasses, wipe a few tables and they pay you. I've got one. Your mother's got one. Most of the world's got one

BETH:

(*frowns at FRANK*) How much do you need to finish the course love?

SIMON:

Five hundred pounds should do it?

*BETH gasps.*

FRANK:

Five, five, five hundred pounds!

BETH:

Oh Simon, you know we don't have that sort of money. It's a fortune

FRANK:

What sort of bloody books cost that? First edition of the bloody bible signed by Jesus bloody Christ himself?

BETH:

Frank!!

FRANK:

Oh no. No, no no, no, no.

SIMON:

I wouldn't ask Dad, Ma, but if I don't get the money – and pay this bloke back

FRANK:

Ah. so now it's a debt. Now we're getting to the truth of it. Gambling is it?  
Why am I not surprised

SIMON:

No, of course not. I sort of borrowed something and it broke and the guy I  
borrowed it off wasn't amused

BETH

What on earth did you borrow?

FRANK:

I bet I can guess. For that sort of money, it was a car wasn't it? Borrowed it to  
show off to some girl I don't doubt and crashed it didn't you?

BETH:

Don't be silly Frank, Si-Si can't drive. He failed his test. (*looks at Simon*) Oh  
Simon!

SIMON:

It wasn't my fault, Ma. I swear it. It was a wreck. A right old banger.  
Shouldn't have been on the road. I didn't even ask to borrow it. Her  
dad.....Ellie's Dad, threw me the keys when I went to pick her up. He just  
assumed I could drive. You don't know this guy, Ma, he's got  
connections. Like on the underground

FRANK:

You mean in the underworld. When are you going to grow up Simon? You  
keep saying you want us to treat you like a man now that you're nearly 21 but  
then you keep doing things like this

BETH:

Oh Simon

FRANK:

You can wind your mother round your little finger but you know we don't  
have that kind of money to spare, and frankly, even if we did, I wouldn't give  
it to you. We can't keep wiping your nose, taking care of you like you were  
still a toddler. Time you grew up my lad

SIMON:.

You always were a bloody skinflint.

FRANK:

What did you say? What did you call me?

BETH:

He didn't mean anything Frank

SIMON:

Well, when was the last time you took Ma out eh? Or bought anything new for this house? It's like living in some kind of bad time machine. This is 1973. Things are happening. Ellie's Dad could really help me. He's loaded and he's got businesses all over the country. Look, they say there's an economic crisis, but so what, there are still opportunities out there "old man", for those, like Ellie's Dad willing to take risks, but if I don't settle this thing he'll think I'm a welsher

FRANK:

Old man! Why you! You're not too big for me to put across my knee

SIMON:

Actually, Dad, I am. I'm my own man now. I only came to you because it was a last resort but I'll be damned if I'll beg

BETH:

Now don't be silly. Frank, you know you can't put Simon over your knee. And Simon, you know we want to help you. We're your parents but this is doing no good.

*(FRANK starts to mumble but BETH quells him with a look)*

so can we please sit down and talk this over sensibly?

*They sit*

*(pause)*

BETH:

Now, what about instalments? We could perhaps help with, say £25 now, and perhaps this man might be willing to wait and you could get a part-time job like your father suggested, and it would at least show him that you were willing to take responsibility

SIMON: *(thinks)*

No, sorry Ma, it would have to be at least 50 quid

FRANK:

I don't believe I'm hearing this

*TESSA enters*

TESSA:

Hearing what? If he's getting 50 pounds, I want 50 pounds – or a dog

SIMON:

You couldn't even look after a bloody rabbit

TESSA:

You killed George. I know you did

BETH:

Not this again.

SIMON:

It was an accident. It looked depressed. I was trying to cheer it up

TESSA:

You let it out on the road

SIMON:

It wanted to be free. Anyway what about the hamster?

FRANK:

Enough of bloody animals. Tessa. Go to your room

TESSA:

It's not fair, what have I done?

BETH:

Nothing love. It's just that your father and me need to have a word with Simon before he goes back to University

TESSA:

University! It's a poxy technical college. I suppose he's winding you right round his little finger like he always does. I'm going out

BETH:

But, where are you going love? It's nearly tea time

TESSA:

Somewhere where I'm appreciated

SIMON:

That would be Battersea Dogs Home then? You'd fit right in with the other mutts

*TESSA storms out.*

BETH:

You shouldn't wind her up like that Simon. She's got A levels in a couple of weeks

SIMON:

Sorry Ma. Listen Dad. I really do hate having to ask but .....

BETH:

You go up and finish packing love. Your Dad and me will have a little chat

FRANK:

That doesn't mean we're going to give you a penny, do you understand?

SIMON:

Thanks Ma, thanks Pops. I'll call in on Gran shall I? See if she wants anything?

BETH:

Just keep the music down Si Si.

*As SIMON exits to hall, SALLY comes in from the kitchen.*

SIMON:

Hey, hi Sal

SALLY:

Hi Simon. How's it going?

SIMON:

*(looks at Frank)*

As well as can be expected

*SIMON exits*

SALLY:

I won't ask

BETH:

I wouldn't. How's your Mom? What did the hospital say?

SALLY:

Not a lot. Just to rest and see how it goes. She's having a lie down

BETH:

Poor Hazel. Frank, give Sally those photos. Show her those Sal. Right up there with David Bailey is Frank. You can't recognise most of us. That should give her a smile. Tell her I'll pop in tomorrow when Simon's gone. I'm doing a Vesta curry so I'll bring her some round

SALLY:

She'll love that. Thanks Beth

FRANK:

Did you want something?

SALLY:

What? Oh, yes. I'm having a clear out and I wondered if your Tessa wanted to have a look through before I chuck it all out. There's a jumble sale in aid of the miners at the Masonic Hall at the weekend

FRANK:

You're joking. Tessa is particular about what she wears

BETH:

Frank!

SALLY:

It's alright Beth. I know what Frank means, but these are not my hot pants or my mini skirts, Frank. I've grown up a bit since those days. I have to wear sensible stuff for work, so I save the "tarty" look for evenings and weekends

BETH:

I'm sure Frank didn't mean to ...

SALLY:

I'm sure he didn't. Look, I've got to get back. I don't like to leave Mom too long. Is Tessa in?

BETH:

No, she's popped out but I'll tell her as soon as she gets back

SALLY:

Okay, well see you later

BETH:

Give Hazel my love. I'll see her tomorrow

SALLY:

Will do. *(pointedly)* Bye Frank

FRANK: *(mumbles)*

What? Oh bye..

*SALLY exits*

BETH:

I don't know why you have to be so rude Frank. You used to like Sal

FRANK:

When she was a kid maybe. I just don't want her influencing our Tessa

BETH:

Influencing Tessa? Don't you think she has a mind of her own. I don't get you sometimes Frank. Anyway, before Mom starts thumping for her tea, we really have to talk about Simon

FRANK:

Must we?

BETH:

Yes. He's nearly 21. He's got to make his own mistakes. It's how he'll learn. You can't keep treating him like a child Frank

FRANK:

But *I'm* not. That's the point. You don't listen. As long as we keep bailing him out he's never going to take responsibility. What about when he has a family of his own? Are we still going to be picking him up, dusting him down, wiping his ar....bottom.. What about when we get old?

BETH:

We're not old though are we Frank? And we do have a bit of money put away. And he's our son. He's in trouble, and I won't just abandon him. He'll finish that business course soon and we have to give him a chance to make his way in the world. It's not easy these days

FRANK:

This is the third time he's come to us for money. I never wanted him to do that mickey mouse course in the first place. Business Studies. What in hell's name is that good for? If you want to go into business you just start. Window cleaning, like I did. I told him he could start with ten quid for a bucket and a ladder. You're too soft with him Beth, you've always been too soft. He's not a child. He's older than you were when we married

BETH:

And who's fault was that?

FRANK:

What do you mean? It takes two to get pregnant.

BETH:

I was 18. You were 24. I knew nothing. Girls didn't in those days

FRANK:

You don't regret it do you Beth?

BETH:

No of course not. But I want our children to have opportunities. Before they do all that

FRANK:

We had a good time didn't we? We're still having a good time aren't we? Sometimes?

BETH:

This isn't about us Frank. It's about the children. Now Simon has nearly finished his course and I think we should give him one last chance. I know what you're going to say, and of course the decision is yours in the end, but we could help out a bit don't you think? And if Simon does his part too and maybe gets a little job

FRANK:

You could always get round me Beth. I don't know why I bother. Remember when we first met? I wanted to go to the pictures, you wanted to take your mother to the cemetery to put flowers on your Dad's grave. Guess what we ended up doing?

BETH:

She nearly fainted when you turned up on a motorbike and she had to get in the sidecar.

FRANK:

It took her a while to get used to me. I called her Gertie

BETH:

Mother?

FRANK:

No, the motorbike. I called your Mother Lady Macbeth, and I still do when nobody's listening. She thinks the sun shines out of my "you know what" these days though

BETH:

You're an acquired taste alright Frank Cooper

FRANK:

Alright. I'll have a word with Simon later. See what I can do. At least we don't have to worry about Tessa. That girl's never got her head out of book. She'll do well

BETH:

And they'll both soon be gone. Flown away like birds leaving the nest. I wonder what that will be like?

FRANK:

It'll be bloody marvellous. That's what it'll be. Anyway, I'll believe it when it happens.

BETH:

Won't you miss them even a bit?.

FRANK:

Nope and anyway, we'll still have Lady M upstairs I expect. I swear she's like that man in that picture in that film - you know -Dorian Gray. She looks fitter than I do some days

BETH:

She has bad days and good days as well you know. It's like that - rheumatoid arthritis. She's very grateful for us, having her here you know Frank, and really she's no trouble most of the time

FRANK:

Hey, hey. I'm not complaining. You do most of the caring and I just get to have scintillating conversations about the olden days. I'm rather fond of her in my own way but it would just be nice to be on our own for a while. We never really had that time did we? Married young, kids, responsibilities. When will it be our time Beth?

BETH:

Soon. Soon.

*(They kiss. Phone rings. BETH sighs, apologises and answers it)*

BETH:

Yes? Yes? Oh, I see. No. My husband will be there shortly

FRANK:

Who is it?

BETH:

It's the police. It's Tessa. She's down the police station. Something to do with an Animal Rights Protest. You'd better take her some clothes Frank. It seems it was a naked protest

FRANK:

Oh bugger!

*FADE LIGHTS*

*END*