

Grandma Gets the Medicine

Grandma sat hunched in her chair by the window. The wicked little eyes followed George closely as he crossed the room towards her.

‘You’re late,’ she snapped.

‘I don’t think I am, Grandma.’

‘Don’t interrupt me in the middle of a sentence!’ she shouted.

‘But you’d finished your sentence, Grandma.’

‘There you go again!’ she cried. ‘Always interrupting and arguing. You really are a tiresome little boy. What’s the time?’

‘It’s exactly eleven o’clock, Grandma.’

‘You’re lying as usual. Stop talking so much and give me my medicine. Shake the bottle first. Then pour it into the spoon and make sure it’s a whole spoonful.’

‘Are you going to gulp it all down in one go?’ George asked her. ‘Or will you sip it?’

‘What I do is none of your business,’ the old woman said. ‘Fill the spoon.’

As George removed the cork and began very slowly to pour the thick brown stuff into the spoon, he couldn’t help thinking back upon all the mad and marvellous things that had gone into the making of this crazy stuff – the shaving soap, the hair remover, the dandruff cure, the automatic washing-machine powder, the flea powder for dogs, the shoe-polish, the black pepper, the horseradish sauce and all the rest of them, not to mention the powerful animal pills and powders and liquids... and the brown paint.

‘Open your mouth wide, Grandma,’ he said, ‘and I’ll pop it in.’

The old hag opened her small wrinkled mouth, showing disgusting pale brown teeth.

‘Here we go!’ George cried out. ‘Swallow it down!’ He pushed the spoon well into her mouth and tipped the mixture down her throat. Then he stepped back to watch the result.

It was worth watching.

Grandma yelled ‘*Oweeeee!*’ and her whole body shot up *whoosh* into the air. It was exactly as though someone had pushed an electric wire through the underneath of her chair and switched on the current. Up she went like a

jack-in-the-box... and she didn't come down... she stayed there... suspended in mid-air... about two feet up... still in a sitting position... but rigid now... frozen... quivering... the eyes bulging... the hair standing straight up on end.

'Is something wrong, Grandma?' George asked her politely. 'Are you all right?'

Suspended up there in space, the old girl was beyond speaking.

The shock that George's marvellous mixture had given her must have been tremendous.

You'd have thought she'd swallowed a red-hot poker the way she took off from that chair.



Then down she came again with a *plop*, back into her seat.

'Call the fire brigade!' she shouted suddenly. 'My stomach's on fire!'

'It's just the medicine, Grandma,' George said. 'It's good strong stuff.'

'Fire!' the old woman yelled. 'Fire in the basement! Get a bucket! Man the hoses! Do something quick!'

'Cool it, Grandma,' George said. But he got a bit of a shock when he saw the smoke coming out of her mouth and out of her nostrils. Clouds of black smoke were coming out of her nose and blowing around the room.

'By golly, you really are on fire,' George said.

'Of course I'm on fire!' she yelled. 'I'll be burned to a crisp! I'll be fried to a frizzle! I'll be boiled like a beetroot!'

George ran into the kitchen and came back with a jug of water. ‘Open your mouth, Grandma!’ he cried. He could hardly see her for the smoke, but he managed to pour half a jugful down her throat. A sizzling sound, the kind you get if you hold a hot frying-pan under a cold tap, came up from deep down in Grandma’s stomach. The old hag bucked and shied and snorted. She gasped and gurgled. Spouts of water came shooting out of her. And the smoke cleared away.

‘The fire’s out,’ George announced proudly. ‘You’ll be all right now, Grandma.’

‘*All right?*’ she yelled. ‘Who’s *all right?* There’s jacky-jumpers in my tummy! There’s squigglers in my belly! There’s bangers in my bottom!’ She began bouncing up and down in the chair. Quite obviously she was not very comfortable.

‘You’ll find it’s doing you a lot of good, that medicine, Grandma,’ George said.

‘*Good?*’ she screamed. ‘Doing me *good?* It’s *killing* me!’

Then she began to bulge.

She was swelling!

She was puffing up all over!

Someone was pumping her up, that’s how it looked!

Was she going to explode?

Her face was turning from purple to green!

But wait! She had a puncture somewhere! George could hear the hiss of escaping air. She stopped swelling. She was going down. She was slowly getting thinner again, shrinking back and back slowly to her shrivelly old self.

‘How’s things, Grandma?’ George said.

No answer.

Then a funny thing happened. Grandma’s body gave a sudden sharp twist and a sudden sharp jerk and she flipped herself clear out of the chair and landed neatly on her two feet on the carpet.



‘That’s terrific, Grandma!’ George cried. ‘You haven’t stood up like that for years! Look at you! You’re standing up all on your own and you’re not even using a stick!’

Grandma didn’t even hear him. The frozen pop-eyed look was back with her again now. She was miles away in another world.

Marvellous medicine, George told himself. He found it fascinating to stand there watching what it was doing to the old hag. What next? he wondered.



He soon found out.

Suddenly she began to grow.

It was quite slow at first... just a very gradual inching upwards... up, up, up... inch by inch... getting taller and taller... about an inch every few seconds... and in the beginning George didn’t notice it.

But when she had passed the five foot six mark and was going on up towards being six feet tall, George gave a jump and shouted, ‘Hey,

Grandma! You're *growing!* You're *going up!* Hang on, Grandma! You'd better stop now or you'll be hitting the ceiling!

But Grandma didn't stop.

It was a truly fantastic sight, this ancient scrawny old woman getting taller and taller, longer and longer, thinner and thinner, as though she were a piece of elastic being pulled upwards by invisible hands.

When the top of her head actually touched the ceiling, George thought she was bound to stop.



But she didn't.

There was a sort of scrunching noise, and bits of plaster and cement came raining down.

'Hadn't you better stop now, Grandma?' George said. 'Daddy's just had this whole room repainted.'

But there was no stopping her now.

Soon, her head and shoulders had completely disappeared through the ceiling and she was still going.

George dashed upstairs to his own bedroom and there she was coming up through the floor like a mushroom.

‘Whoopee!’ she shouted, finding her voice at last. ‘Hallelujah, here I come!’



‘Steady on, Grandma,’ George said.

‘With a heigh-nonny-no and up we go!’ she shouted. ‘Just watch me grow!’

‘This is *my* room,’ George said. ‘Look at the mess you’re making.’

‘Terrific medicine!’ she cried. ‘Give me some more!’

She’s dotty as a doughnut, George thought.

‘Come on, boy! Give me some more!’ she yelled. ‘Dish it out! I’m slowing down!’

George was still clutching the medicine bottle in one hand and the spoon in the other. Oh well, he thought, why not? He poured out a second dose and popped it into her mouth.

‘Oweee!’ she screamed and up she went again. Her feet were still on the floor downstairs in the living-room but her head was moving quickly towards the ceiling of the bedroom.

‘I’m on my way now, boy!’ she called down to George. ‘Just watch me go!’

‘That’s the attic above you, Grandma!’ George called out. ‘I’d keep out of there! It’s full of bugs and bogles!’

Crash! The old girl’s head went through the ceiling as though it were butter.

George stood in his bedroom gazing at the shambles. There was a big hole in the floor and another in the ceiling, and sticking up like a post between the two was the middle part of Grandma. Her legs were in the room below, her head in the attic.



‘I’m still going!’ came the old screechy voice from up above. ‘Give me another dose, my boy, and let’s go through the roof!’

‘No, Grandma, no!’ George called back. ‘You’re busting up the whole house!’

‘To heck with the house!’ she shouted. ‘I want some fresh air! I haven’t been outside for twenty years!’

‘By golly, she *is* going through the roof!’ George told himself. He ran downstairs. He rushed out of the back door into the yard. It would be simply awful, he thought, if she bashed up the roof as well. His father would be furious. And he, George, would get the blame. *He* had made the medicine. *He* had given her too much. ‘Don’t come through the roof, Grandma,’ he prayed. ‘Please don’t.’

