

Bad Frog!



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BAD FROG!

Chapter One

Olly was in disgrace. Again.

“What a *terrible* mess!” snapped Great-Aunt Grindle. “How dare you make this terrible mess in my house!”

She pointed at the kitchen table. It was perfectly clean – apart from one small, round puddle of water.

“Sorry,” said Olly. “I was painting. I tidied up after. I just didn’t see that puddle. Sorry.”

“*Painting!*” Great-Aunt Grindle glared as if he’d said “Chopping up the furniture.”

“I’ll have no painting in here!” she scolded. “It’s far too messy. In *my* day, children played outside with marbles and bits of string. Out you go till tea-time! And don’t bring any mud back in!”

Great-Aunt Grindle wasn’t much bigger than Olly. She was tiny and trim, with darting eyes as sharp as needles.

And she was always tidying up. Even as she spoke, she tugged open the kitchen drawers and peered inside them angrily, as if she was looking for something that shouldn’t be there.

Olly didn’t dare argue. Mum had told him to be polite to Great-Aunt Grindle. So he went outside without a word.

Great-Aunt Grindle had a garden, but she didn’t let Olly play there in case he got the grass dirty. Slowly and sadly, he walked down the road to the shops.

He wished he had some-one to play with. But Olly and his Mum had only just moved to Great-Aunt Grindle's house. He hadn't started at his new school yet. He had no friends here.

As he reached the shops, it began to rain. Olly huddled in a doorway and gazed at a poster across the road. It showed a huge and happy sheepdog bounding over a golden cornfield, with a boy running after it.

Olly sighed. He wished he lived near a golden cornfield. He wished he had a huge and happy sheepdog – or just a little dog – or *any* sort of animal to play with. But there was no chance of that, not with Great-Aunt Grindle.

“We're very lucky that Great-Aunt Grindle has let us stay,” Mum had said, when they moved in. “When I've earned more money in my new job, we can get a place of our own. But not yet. So please try not to upset her!”

Olly did try. He tried so hard to be quiet and polite that he felt as if he was disappearing. But he could never be clean and tidy enough for Great-Aunt Grindle.

Olly shivered in the rain. Turning away from the poster, he stared unhappily at the puddles in the road.

From the biggest puddle, somebody stared back.

Chapter Two

A pair of bulging eyes blinked up at him.

The water surged. A fat, green shape jumped out. It hopped on to the pavement and looked at Olly.

It was a frog. A *big* frog. Olly liked frogs, but he had never realised they grew that big.

“You can’t stay there!” he told the frog. “You’ll get trodden on, or run over.”

He bent down to it carefully, not wanting to scare it. But the frog wasn’t scared. It jumped right into his hands.

“Good frog!” said Olly. The frog blinked at him.

“**BURP,**” it said. It felt as heavy as a stone, as silky-smooth as mud.

“You should be in a pond,” said Olly. “But I don’t know any ponds. You’d better come home with me. Would you like that?”

“**BURP!**” said the frog, and it gave him a wide, wicked grin.

Olly carried the frog back to Great-Aunt Grindle’s house. As he tiptoed in, he could hear Great-Aunt Grindle banging a broom around. Quietly, he crept upstairs.

Since the frog was rather muddy, Olly decided he had better clean it up. He took it into the bathroom.

“You can have a nice wash here,” he said. He ran some water in the basin, and put the frog in.

“**BURP!**” said the frog indignantly. It hopped out of the basin and landed on the floor with a muddy SPLAT. Then it jumped across the bathroom – SPLAT, SPLAT, SPLAT – and leapt into the bath.

“Good frog!” said Olly, very impressed. This frog could certainly jump! “I shall call you Mr Splat,” he said.

“**BURP,**” said Mr Splat, licking his lips with a fat, green tongue.

“Are you hungry?” asked Olly. “Stay here, and I’ll get you something to eat.”

He hurried downstairs. As he sneaked past the living-room, he could see Great-Aunt Grindle through a crack in the door. She had lifted up the carpet and was peering under it angrily, as if she was looking for something that shouldn’t be there.

Olly tiptoed past her into the kitchen. Since he had no idea what frogs ate, he took the food he liked best – a bowl of rice crispies, some raisins, a chocolate biscuit, and a sausage roll out of the fridge.

He carried them carefully upstairs to the bathroom.

The bath was empty. A big green puddle of shampoo lay on the floor. A trail of gooey green splats led to the door.

Olly followed the splats out onto the landing. “Mr Splat? Where are you?” he called softly.

Then he gasped in alarm, as he saw where the green trail led...
Straight into Great-Aunt Grindle’s bedroom.

Chapter Three

Olly put his head around the bedroom door. He couldn't see Mr Splat – but he could see that he'd been here. Something had knocked over a bottle of hand-cream and SPLATTED in it. There were big, pink, sticky splats all over the floor, the bed and the dressing-table.

“Oh, no!” said Olly. Just then, he heard the front door open and close.

Mum had come home from work. She plodded tiredly upstairs, and saw Olly on the landing.

“Olly? What are you doing with all that food?”

“It's for Mr Splat,” whispered Olly. Quickly he explained about finding Mr Splat, and losing him again.

“Well, we can't leave him in Great-Aunt Grindle's room!” said Mum. “Put the food down. Maybe he'll come out to get it.”

So Olly spread the food across the floor.

“**BURP!**” said the wardrobe. It swung open, and Mr Splat jumped out. He was covered with pink hand-cream. So were most of the clothes in the wardrobe.

Mr Splat hopped over to the food and gobbled up the sausage roll.

“Good frog!” said Olly, and he tried to pick him up.

But Mr Splat was slippery with hand-cream. He slid through Olly's fingers like a bar of wet soap, jumped out of the room and leapt down the stairs.

SPLAT! SPLAT! SPLAT!

Olly couldn't catch him. Mr Splat wriggled away and splatted noisily down the hall to the kitchen.

"What's all this racket?" cried Great-Aunt Grindle, dashing out of the living-room with her broom. "Are you making a mess?"

Quickly Olly stood on the nearest pink splat to hide it from her.

"I was just, er, going to make you a cup of tea," he said.

"Tea? I haven't got time for a cup of tea!" exclaimed Great-Aunt Grindle. "I've got to clean the cupboard under the stairs."

She dived into the cupboard under the stairs and began to sweep it out angrily, as if she was hunting for something that shouldn't be there.

Olly and Mum hurried into the kitchen. Mr Splat was nowhere to be seen.

Then Olly spotted a trail of pink splats. They were fainter now, because the hand-cream had worn off, but he could see that they led to the fridge.

He flung open the fridge door. Mr Splat was sitting inside, with three sausage rolls sticking out of his mouth.

"Good frog!" said Olly, grabbing at Mr Splat. Mr Splat slid through his fingers, and made him knock over a bottle of milk.

"Good frog!" said Mum. *She* grabbed at Mr Splat. Mr Splat wriggled out of her hands, and made her knock over a jug of gravy.

Pools of milk and gravy spread across the floor. Mr Splat splatted happily through them, and hopped onto the table.

“**BURP!**” he said.

Mum grabbed at Mr Splat, slipped on the milk and sat down with a thud. “Drat that Splat!” she cried.

Olly grabbed at Mr Splat. Mr Splat took a flying leap from the table, knocked over the teapot, and landed in the sink. He squatted on the dishes and grinned at Olly with a wide, wicked grin.

“**BURP!**” he said.

Then Olly felt so upset that he forgot to be quiet. “Bad frog!” he cried. “I rescued you from the puddle, didn’t I? I gave you a sausage roll! And look what you’ve done in return! You’ve made a terrible mess! *Bad frog!*”

And then Great-Aunt Grindle walked in.

Chapter Four

Great-Aunt Grindle stared at Mr Splat with eyes as sharp as needles. Mr Splat stared back with eyes that bulged like gobstoppers.

Then he gave her his wide, wicked grin.

“**BURP**,” he said.

“So *you’re* the cause of this terrible mess!” hissed Great-Aunt Grindle. She brandished her broom, and swatted Mr Splat.

WHACK! went the broom on the sink.

Mr Splat jumped out of the way, and the broom crashed into the teacups.

Mr Splat leapt on to the windowsill.

WHACK! went the broom. It missed him completely, and knocked over three pot-plants.

Mr Splat sprang on to the table.

WHACK! went the broom, sending the sugar bowl flying. Sugar fell like hail through the air.

Grinning widely, Mr Splat hopped on to the shelves.

Hissing fiercely, Great-Aunt Grindle charged with her broom.

WHACK, WHACK, WHACK!

THUMP, CLANG, SMASH! went the bread bin, the cake tin, and all the jars of jam. The floor was covered in milk and soil and sugar and tea and jam and cake.

“Aunt Grindle! Stop!” cried Mum. Great-Aunt Grindle took no notice. She spun around the kitchen, whacking at Mr Splat, and sending plates and saucepans flying.

She hadn’t managed to hit Mr Splat once. He was always one jump ahead of her. At last he leapt into Olly’s arms, and sat there panting.

“**BURP!**” he croaked.

Great-Aunt Grindle shook her broom at him. “*Let me get at that frog!*”

Although Olly felt cross with Mr Splat, he felt even crosser with Great-Aunt Grindle. He couldn’t possibly stay quiet and polite while she was trying to splat Mr Splat with a broom.

So he shouted, “Leave Mr Splat alone! He hasn’t hurt you.”

“He’s made a terrible mess!” she shrieked.

“No, he hasn’t!” said Olly. “*I spilt the milk. Mum spilt the gravy. You spilt everything else. Mr Splat didn’t spill a thing.*”

He didn’t mention the shampoo or the hand-cream, since Great-Aunt Grindle hadn’t seen those yet. “*It’s you!*” he said. “You’ve made a terrible mess!”

Great-Aunt Grindle gazed around, and her mouth fell open.

It looked as if the kitchen cupboards had exploded. Every cup and plate and pan was on the floor. Every cake and biscuit lay in crumbs.

Every jar was broken, except for a tiny jar of nutmegs on the very top shelf.

Great-Aunt Grindle blinked as she took in the sight. Suddenly, her eyes didn't look as sharp as needles any more. They looked dull and dismayed.

She let the broom fall, and sank into a chair.

"I've made a terrible mess!" she whimpered.

"Don't worry! We'll clean it all up," said Mum. "Won't we, Olly?"

Olly didn't see why he should. He was about to complain.

Then he heard Great-Aunt Grindle sigh. He saw how tiny and sad she looked, and he felt sorry for her.

"I suppose we could clear *some* of it up," he said. "But there's nothing wrong with a bit of mess."

"**BURP!**" agreed Mr Splat.

Great-Aunt Grindle looked sadder than ever.

"Yes, there is," she said. "If only I'd been tidier, I'd never have lost –" She stopped.

Chapter Five

“Lost what?” asked Mum.

“Nothing,” said Great-Aunt Grindle.

“Tell us!” said Olly.

“My golden ring,” muttered Great-Aunt Grindle, as if she was ashamed. “Twenty-two years ago, I left it lying around somewhere. I just can’t think where I put it. I was terribly untidy in those days, you see.”

“Were you?”

“Oh, yes! I’ve been tidying up ever since, but I’ve never found my ring.”

“A golden ring?” asked Olly, astounded. “Is *that* what you’ve been hunting for in the cupboards, and under the carpet?”

“Of course,” said Great-Aunt Grindle. “You don’t think I clean up for fun, do you? But I don’t think I’ll ever find my lovely golden ring.”

All this time, Mr Splat had crouched in Olly’s arms. Now he squirmed, and gave a mighty leap.

He sprang right to the very top shelf and sat there, grinning.

“**BURP!**” he croaked, as he knocked the last little jar of nutmegs off the shelf. It smashed onto the floor.

Olly was horrified. He didn’t want Great-Aunt Grindle to start blaming Mr Splat for the mess all over again. Quickly he knelt down and began to scoop up the nutmegs.

Then he saw something gleaming on the floor. He picked it out from the nutmegs and held it up. It was bright and golden.

Great-Aunt Grindle gasped. “My ring!”

“You put it in the nutmeg jar,” said Olly.

“I must have tidied it away without thinking!” cried Great-Aunt Grindle. “I don’t like nutmegs – haven’t used them in twenty years. No wonder I couldn’t find it!”

She polished the ring on her apron and slipped it on to her finger. It was the first time Olly had ever seen her smile.

“That’s what happens when you tidy up too much,” he said. “You *lose* things.”

Great-Aunt Grindle laughed. It was the first time Olly had ever heard her laugh.

“Now I’ve got my ring back, I never need tidy up again!” she cried.

Mum looked round the exploded kitchen and pulled a face. “Well, actually....” she said.

So Mum and Olly fetched mops and a bucket, and helped Great-Aunt Grindle clear up the terrible mess. Mr Splat helped by eating the cake and biscuit crumbs, and licking up the jam.

Great-Aunt Grindle didn’t do a lot. She was too busy holding out her hand to admire her gleaming golden ring.

“Good as new!” she declared. “What a clever frog! Shall we keep him as a pet, Olly?”

“Oh, yes!” said Olly.

“He can live in the garden,” decided Great-Aunt Grindle, “and eat my slugs and snails.”

“**BURP!**” said Mr Splat indignantly. His eyes bulged even more than before.

“I think he’d prefer to live in the bath,” said Olly, “with maybe a wardrobe to sleep in. And I don’t think he likes slugs and snails. He prefers sausage rolls.”

“Then sausage rolls he shall have!” said Great Aunt Grindle. “But he’ll have to share your wardrobe. All right?”

“Perfect!” said Olly. “Thank you!”

Mr Splat splatted into the bucket. He sat there blinking in the soap-suds and wearing a wide and wicked grin.

“**BURP,**” he croaked.

Olly grinned back at Mr Splat.

“*Good frog!*” he said.

THE END

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