

FAMILY

It was Grandma and Grandpa's Pearl Wedding anniversary in a couple of weeks.

'We're not having a party,' said Grandma. 'That's not our way.' She spoke as if parties were incredibly vulgar, on a par with naked mud wrestling in pig sties. 'We thought we'd like to celebrate the occasion with a special Sunday lunch.' She paused. 'Just for the family.'

She meant Jo and me. Once she was off the phone we moaned and groaned, trying to think up wild excuses to get out of it. We don't like going to Grandma and Grandpa's at the best of times.

'And this will be the worst,' said Jo. 'They'll talk about their wedding and their anniversaries, all thirty of them. Grandma will fiddle with her wedding and engagement and eternity rings. She might *even* get out their wedding album. Oh help, she might even delve in the trunk upstairs and come out with this truly horrible yellowy-white lace veil and then her voice will go all shaky when she says she kept it specially for me to wear at my wedding. And then she'll stop and sigh because I didn't ever have a wedding. Watch out, Charlie. She'll be

saving it for you now.'

'I'm not going to get married!' I insisted. 'I'm going to stay here with you. I look old for my age and you look young so by the time I'm grown up we'll just be like two sisters. I'll be earning too so it'll be easy-peasy, simple-pimple paying that old mortgage.'

'I wish!' said Jo.

We didn't have any spare cash for Pearl Wedding presents so we had to be inventive. Jo bought a half-price droopy pot plant and fed and watered it until it stood up straight and grew new glossy leaves. She bought some pearl-white ribbon and then tied thirty tiny bows all over it.



'There? Do you think it'll do?' she said, tying the very last bow.

'It looks lovely.'

'It's nowhere near as impressive as your cake.'

Yes, I'd made Grandma and Grandpa a proper cake! I used Lisa's mum's recipe book. I couldn't do a fruit cake because the ingredients were too expensive. I just did a sponge. Well, I did three sponges if you must know. I didn't quite get the hang of it the first time and failed to realize you had to mix it all like crazy until your arm practically falls off. There was just this surly sulky crust at the bottom of the tin when I took it out of the oven. The second go was better, but I was too eager, opening the oven door a couple of times to see how it was getting on.

It didn't rise properly and so I left it in longer and then it got a bit burnt. I cut off the burnt bits and made it into a trifle, but even so, I was starting to think I was squandering money instead of saving it. Jo said I should have one more go and *this* time it was third time lucky. My sponge was *perfect*.

Now I could get started on the best bit. I covered it with apricot glaze to stop any crumbs getting mixed up with the icing. Then I piped *Happy Anniversary* across the top of the icing and made little rosettes all the way round and studded it with tiny pearly balls. It took ages but I was so proud when I'd finished. Jo looked worried when I showed it off to her.

'What?'

'It's beautiful,' she said.

'They'll love it.'

Ha! They didn't love it. Or Jo's plant. Grandpa nodded and said,

'How delightful. Thank you so much. How thoughtful of you. But you really shouldn't have.'

That sounds OK down on paper. But my grandpa speaks in this slow serious voice with hardly any expression. He doesn't go *Wow!* or hug or kiss. If he ever touches me accidentally he wipes his hands on his hankie afterwards, as if I'm sticky.

Grandma uses enough expression for two. 'Oh, darlings, we weren't expecting *presents*. Especially in your current circumstances. Josephine, I've been very worried about your new job, you've hardly told me anything about it.'



Eating Words
BY KATHERINE HAUTH

When you know
that vore means eat,
you will know
that insectivores feed
on grasshoppers, moths, and butterflies,
mosquitoes, bees, and plain-old flies.

When you know
that carni means meat,
you will know
that carnivores eat
snakes and lizards, deer and lamb,
carrion, birds, fish, and ham.

When you know
that herb means plant,
you will know
that herbivores CAN'T
eat anything that moves on a foot,
just foods that spring up from a root.

When you know
that omni means all,
you will know
that omnivores call

Everything
they can suck or chew—
sometimes even me or you—
food.

Выберете 2 стихотворения Г. Остера для перевода на английский язык

* * *

Врите чаще.
От вранья
Не охрипнет горло.
От него во рту у нас
Не бывает горько.
От вранья не вспухнет нос,
Не заложит уши.
И тошнит не тех, кто врал,
А того, кто слушал.

* * *

Откуда ты знаешь, что нет под
кроватью
Каких-нибудь мелких и хитрых
существ,
Которые только и ждут, чтобы мама
Пришла в твою комнату выключить
свет?
Наука твердит, что таких не бывает?
А вдруг они есть и начнут вылезать?
Во имя науки и папу, и маму
Пошли на разведку к тебе под
кровать!

* * *

Если ты свои мечты
Отогнать не можешь
И они вокруг тебя
Носятся как мухи,
Постарайся подманить
Самую Большую
И прихлопни, чтоб она
Больше не жужжала.

* * *

Попросите маму,
Чтоб она достала
С самой верхней полки
Ваш любимый мячик.
Но не объясняйте,
Как туда попал он
И куда пропало
То, что там стояло.

* * *

Не вздумай бабушку пугать,
Рассказывая ей,
Кого и чем ты замочил
В компьютерной игре.
Пускай считает, что внучок
Сегодня целый день
Сидел тихонько в уголке
И с мышкою играл.

* * *

Если ты вставать не хочешь,
А тебе включили свет,
Залезай под одеяло
И укройся с головой.
В темноте, под одеялом,
Можно прятаться весь день.
Там тебя, в крошечном мраке,
Папа с мамой не найдут.