

Grandma Brown

MARY BURRIN

"Sit down, Grandma. There's no need for you to help. I can finish the Turkey myself," said Effie Brown to her mother-in-law.

Hmm! Sitting down was all she'd done since she'd been here. As for finishing the turkey, Effie always cooked meat too brown and dry, so hard you couldn't eat it, thought Grandma Brown.

For years the family had gathered at her house for Thanksgiving dinner. There had been a twenty pound turkey to start cooking the night before, pumpkin pies, cranberry sauce, and oyster cocktails. Now they said she was too old to have it, and her efficient daughter-in-law prepared the dinner. It wasn't the getting old she minded. After all, eighty-three wasn't so very old. Grandma Brown's hand touched her capped head. She must remember to take her curlers off before the folks came. No, it wasn't the getting old. It was being babied and protected as a doddering old woman she hated.

They were right. She couldn't see well enough to cook, but they didn't need to tell her. She didn't mind being almost blind so much, if only they would forget their well-intentioned sympathies and treat her as a human being.

Why didn't some of the grandchildren come? Then she would have someone to talk to. When a car drove in, she hastened to the window. She couldn't see who it was so she waited till Effie looked out and said, "Reuben and Alice usually come early. Suppose Reuben wants to go hunting."

Grandma Brown allowed herself to be kissed and hugged by them all.

Reuben called her "Grom" and exclaimed on how young she was looking. Beloved liar! During the general bustle Grandma remembered to go in her room and take off her curlers. She combed her hair, by touch mostly, and pinned the ends into a small knot.

"How nice your hair looks, Grandma." Anne, Reuben's oldest daughter, sat down beside her on the couch and began to talk chummily of the difficulties of sleeping on kid curlers.

Anne's a nice girl, thought Grandma Brown. Not much pride though. Didn't care much for clothes. Only one in this family that did was Kay, Tom's wife; and she was a fashion plate with practically nothing but a vacuum under her hat, and hands she didn't dare put in water for fear of ruining her manicure. No children either, and probably never would have. A fine old age some of this gay younger generation was going to have without any grandchildren to keep them from getting bored with themselves. She hadn't particularly wanted the three sons she'd had, and it had been very annoying to stay home with them, but if she had it to do over, she'd have three daughters, too. Her grandchildren had been devil-inspired pests when they were young. Funny thing about them. They had grown up to be likeable, decent people.

"Dinner's ready, Grandma." Anne helped her up. As she sat down at the table she sniffed expertly. Just as she thought, Effie had burned the turkey.