



Animal Pills

At this point, George suddenly had an extra good wheeze. Although the medicine cupboard in the house was forbidden ground, what about the medicines his father kept on the shelf in the shed next to the henhouse? The animal medicines?

What about *those*?

Nobody had ever told him he mustn't touch *them*.

Let's face it, George said to himself, hairspray and shaving-cream and shoe-polish are all very well and they will no doubt cause some splendid explosions inside the old geezer, but what the magic mixture now needs is a touch of the real stuff, real pills and

real tonics, to give it punch and muscle.

George picked up the heavy three-quarters full saucepan and carried it out of the back door. He crossed the farmyard and headed straight for the shed alongside the henhouse. He knew his father wouldn't be there. He was out haymaking in one of the meadows.

George entered the dusty old shed and put the saucepan on the bench. Then he looked up at the medicine shelf. There were five big bottles there. Two were full of pills, two were full of runny stuff and one was full of powder.

'I'll use them all,' George said. 'Grandma needs them. Boy, does she need them!'



The first bottle he took down contained an orange-coloured powder. The label said, FOR CHICKENS WITH FOUL PEST, HEN GRIPE, SORE BEAKS, GAMMY LEGS, COCKERELITIS, EGG TROUBLE, BROODINESS OR LOSS OF FEATHERS. MIX ONE SPOONFUL ONLY WITH EACH BUCKET OF FEED.

‘Well,’ George said aloud to himself as he tipped in the whole bottleful, ‘the old bird won’t be losing any feathers after she’s had a dose of this.’

The next bottle he took down had about five hundred gigantic purple pills in it. FOR HORSES WITH HOARSE THROATS, it said on the label. THE HOARSE-THROATED HORSE SHOULD SUCK ONE PILL TWICE A DAY.

‘Grandma may not have a hoarse throat,’ George said, ‘but she’s certainly got a sharp tongue. Maybe they’ll cure that instead.’ Into the saucepan went the five hundred gigantic purple pills.



Then there was a bottle of thick yellowish liquid. FOR COWS, BULLS AND BULLOCKS, the label said. WILL

CURE COW POX, COW MANGE, CRUMPLED HORNS, BAD BREATH IN BULLS, EARACHE, TOOTHACHE, HEADACHE, HOOFACE, TAILACHE AND SORE UDDERS.

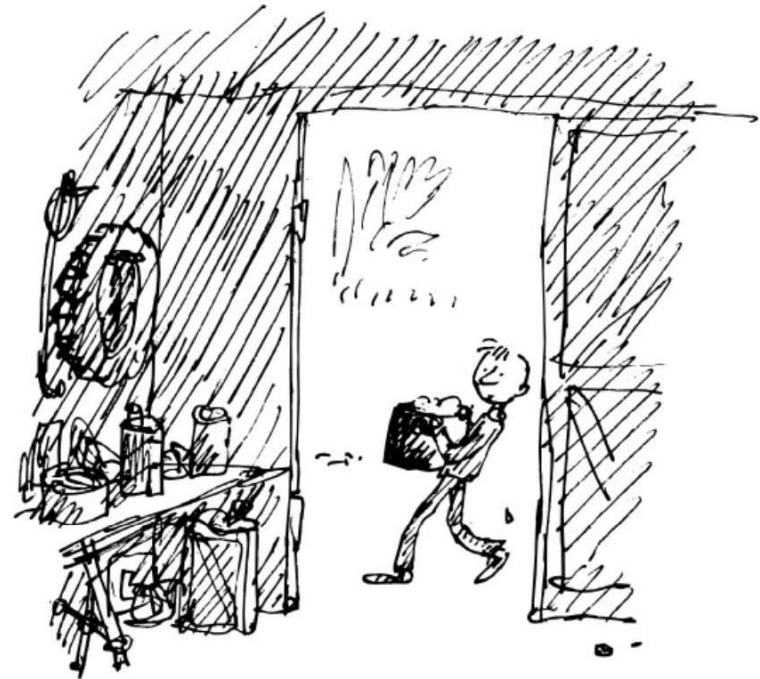
‘That grumpy old cow in the living-room has every one of those rotten illnesses,’ George said. ‘She’ll need it all.’ With a slop and a gurgle, the yellow liquid splashed into the now nearly full saucepan.

The next bottle contained a brilliant red liquid. SHEEPDIP, it said on the label. FOR SHEEP WITH SHEEPROT AND FOR GETTING RID OF TICKS AND FLEAS. MIX ONE SPOONFUL IN ONE GALLON OF WATER AND SLOSH IT OVER THE SHEEP. CAUTION, DO NOT MAKE THE MIXTURE ANY STRONGER OR THE WOOL WILL FALL OUT AND THE ANIMAL WILL BE NAKED.

‘By gum,’ said George, ‘how I’d love to walk in and slosh it all over old Grandma and watch the ticks and fleas go jumping off her. But I can’t. I mustn’t. So she’ll have to drink it instead.’ He poured the bright red medicine into the saucepan.

The last bottle on the shelf was full of pale green pills. PIG PILLS, the label announced. FOR PIGS WITH PORK PRICKLES, TENDER TROTTERS, BRISTLE BLIGHT AND SWINE SICKNESS. GIVE ONE PILL PER DAY. IN SEVERE CASES TWO PILLS MAY BE GIVEN, BUT MORE THAN THAT WILL MAKE THE PIG ROCK AND ROLL.

‘Just the stuff,’ said George, ‘for that miserable old pig back there in the house. She’ll need a very big dose.’ He tipped all the green pills, hundreds and hundreds of them, into the saucepan.



There was an old stick lying on the bench that had been used for stirring paint. George picked it up and started to stir his marvellous concoction.

The mixture was as thick as cream, and as he stirred and stirred, many wonderful colours rose up from the depths and blended together, pinks, blues, greens, yellows and browns.

George went on stirring until it was all well mixed, but even so there were still hundreds of pills lying on the bottom that hadn't melted. And there was his mother's splendid powder-puff floating on the surface. 'I shall have to boil it all up,' George said. 'One good quick boil on the stove is all it needs.' And with that he staggered back towards the house with the enormous heavy saucepan.

On the way, he passed the garage, so he went in to see if he could find any other interesting things. He added the following:

Half a pint of ENGINE OIL – to keep Grandma's engine going smoothly.

Some ANTI-FREEZE – to keep her radiator from freezing up in winter.

A handful of GREASE – to grease her creaking joints.

Then back to the kitchen.

Task – please answer the following questions.

1. Why does George's dad have lots of animal pills?
2. Why does Roald Dahl use capital letters for certain words or phrases?
3. One label reads 'THE HOARSE-THROATED HORSE SHOULD SUCK ONE PILL TWICE A DAY.' (on page 2), what does hoarse mean?
4. On page 4, Roald Dahl uses the word melted, what other word could you use that means the same?
5. Why does George need to go back to the kitchen?