

IT'S GRIMM UP NORTH

Yorkshire. 1148AD. The darkest hour of the Dark Ages.

The family Grimm – the richest merchants this side of the Don Valley - and the other side for that matter. Cloth. Barrels. Grain. Sand. Iron. Cheese. You name it, the Grimms knew how to buy it cheap and sell it expensive. They had the market cornered in everything that could be wrapped up and put in a box. Old Enoch Grimm – the family patriarch - ruled over his young 'uns with a rod of iron. Literally. It was a yard and a half long with spikes all over it and he carried it around with him everywhere.

And none displeased him more than his youngest, little Graham Grimm. Or Twirly Curly Graham Grimm as he was known by the locals ('twirly' on account of his poor lame twisted leg and 'curly' because of his flowing brown locks and big brown eyelashes longer than a cow's). Graham was – well – he was the opposite of the apple of his father's eye. Whatever that might be. The dog dirt in his father's eye perhaps. Nothing he did could please old Enoch. Whereas his brothers liked fighting and thumping each other, Graham preferred wandering the moors and the woods and the drover's paths and the valleys on the edge of the town. His father tried setting him up with a job in the business,

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The day of the Mighty Prank. If only I could remember it.

I know one of our customers made a complaint about it. I've sent the complaint letter to you as evidence. Can you fathom what the Mighty Prank was? I'd love to have a giggle reminiscing about that.

Go to Evidence 1: Complaint Letter

Please refer to the Teacher Instructions for extra support guiding the children and young people.

There was a reason why Graham was so drawn to the moors and the valleys and the glens and the dark wooded places that others shunned come twilight. You see, he was the youngest of seven children, just as his father had been before him. And that made him the seventh child of a seventh child. A rare and powerful thing which gave him even rarer powers. For Graham's eyes were open to all magical beings: from the Fairies to the Pixies, to the Ogres and the Goblins, he could see them all. And on the day that his father came looking for him in the shop, Graham had been yarning it with one of the Bogles at Hatherton Tops.

As Graham limped back after sundown, he realised he was for it as soon as he saw his father outside the shop bashing that spiky iron rod into the stony mud. That was it – Graham was out on his ear. His last chance and he'd blown it. His father was furious after receiving a complaint from a customer. According to Enoch, Graham was no Grimm. He was, from that moment, banished.

Graham limped his way to the old tarn at Crimton Mire up by Hatherton Tops. If nothing else there was a hollowed-out tree stump he could take shelter in. And he could live off the

bilberries which grew all around, for a week or two at least.

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I remember writing in my journal straight after this moment. I was so lost, so unsure of things. I really didn't know what to do.

But alas, my office is so full of papers, most of which have invisible ink on them, that I just can't make out what I had written on that day.

I enclose what evidence remains of my journal entry; can you complete it please?

Go to Evidence 2: Journal Entry: G. Grimm

Please refer to the Teacher Instructions for extra support guiding the children and young people.

It was raining when he arrived – and as the water poured down on him and then the hail, who should sidle over to him to see what was up but the very Bogle he'd been chatting to earlier.

He took Little Graham's limp hand in his claw (Bogle's have claws – though not very frightening ones) and led him to the nearby Hatherton Scar. The Bogle pursed his purple lips (yes – they have purple lips too) and blew. There followed a sound like a hundred robins taking flight and the tumbling waterfall parted like a curtain of molten glass, revealing a dark doorway beyond.

“Go on lad – step through – I'm with thee so there's nowt to be

afraid of.”

Graham looked nervous as they passed into the dark cave. Piled up against the black rocks was a treasury the like of which Graham could not have conjured in his imagination. The Bogle took in his disbelief. “Oh aye – we’ve got lots of treasure.”

“What do the magical beings do with all this?” asked Graham still trying to take in the mounds of gold and silver pennies and farthings and sovereigns. “What do they spend it on - what would they spend it on – if they were to go to market?”

“Well, they wouldn’t go to market – as you say – they can conjure anything they need’

“Anything?”

“Well almost anything. There’s one thing they can’t conjure, of course.” And that’s when the Bogle told Graham the biggest, most important secret he would ever hear.

Stories.

“How us magical beings we wish we could conjure stories like you humans. To hear your stories – that gives us a lift like nothing else. When we hear one of your stories, to us – it’s like walking in sunshine – it’s like a thousand days of sunshine in one go. It restores and replenishes our magical energy. It’s quite wonderful. You humans - you swim in story like fish swim in water – and you don’t realise how enchanting it is. You make up people just as if they’ve been alive – and then think of amazing things that have happened to them – quicker than a falling pebble. Why, that’s a fantastic thing. And just as you need to walk in sunshine or you’ll sicken, we need to walk in your story.”

“What if I was to see you got some of that energy – if I got

people to come and make up stories - and you were nearby when it happened? What do you think to that?"

"I think that's a grand idea!" said the Bogle.

"And what if I was to entice the magical creatures in with all kinds of goodies – fare that might just appeal to the likes of your kin – items that would make them feel right at home?"

"Even better," said the Bogle, tapping his curly claws together in delight.

Now little Graham was no slouch himself when it came to telling tall tales – they came easy to him. But he realised it would be in his interest to get others to join him – to get the most out of the whole enterprise. 'They need our stories like we need sunshine,' he said to himself. 'So let's start shining.'

The first thing Graham did, was to think of a potion that would have magical beings venturing from afar to buy. He considered using Goblin Mucus, Phoenix Ash and even Extra Hairy Warts, until he found the perfect First Potion.

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I'm always looking for new potions, elixirs, and herbaceous brews to stock in my apothecary, do you fancy having a go at creating some new products for me?

I've sent you one of our already-existing labels - the famous Success Stimulant - so you know what one looks like, and a blank label for you to make up your own.

Your potion needs to answer the following question:

If you could drink any magical concoction right now, in this moment, what would it be and why would you drink it?

Remember, all enchanted tonics have side effects...

Go to Evidence 3 & 4: Grimm & Co Potion Labels

Please refer to the Teacher Instructions for extra support guiding the children and young people.

And what do you know – within the year Graham had set up the most profitable establishment run by any Grimm. Well, the Bogarts and Bogles and Brownies and Elves and Hobs and Pixies were soon queuing round the door – any who arrived down-hearted left refreshed with replenished magical energy and a special Grimm potion or two.

And word soon spread. Fairy gold flowed from Graham's pockets. And when he felt he had enough –he went to tell his father all – since until that point old Enoch had little idea as to the fate of his youngest son.

The old man couldn't believe it. "Nay son, you've done me proud. You know what? I think you might just be the greatest Grimm of all."

And Grimm & Co is still with us. The magical folks' need for

stories to refresh and lift their spirits and their powers remains as great as ever – greater even in a time when most humans don't even believe in such beings. To that end – quite a few hundred years ago actually – the shop took on an extra role – to encourage and inspire the imaginations of young storytellers everywhere.

You see when a great story is told the burst of energy those magical creatures get is quite phenomenal – like a bomb going off. Or a thousand bombs. Or a hundred thousand if it's really good.

If you have written something you are proud of, send them to me, will you? I'd love to read what you've done. Send your writing over to info@grimmandco.co.uk.

Ta!