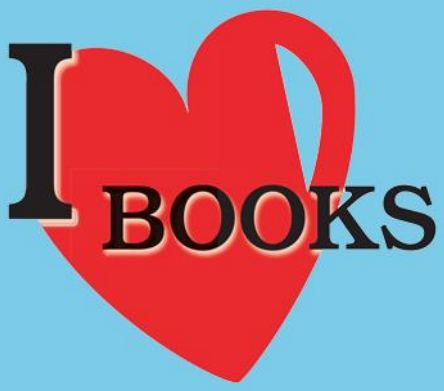


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SUPER GRAN



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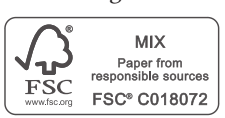
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To Granny Min
– who inspired
Super Gran



GRAN AND SUPER GRAN

Granny Smith, an ordinary, little old white-haired lady, resting on a seat in the public park, began to feel decidedly peculiar . . .

Granny Smith was old and her eyesight and hearing were not as good as they used to be; she needed glasses with extra-thick lenses, and she needed a hearing aid.

Her poor, thin old body was stiff and full of rheumatism, and her legs were weak; she needed a walking stick to help her get along. She felt the cold so much, even in summer, that she had to wrap up well; so she was wearing a thick coat over

her colourful floral dress, a scarf and a tartan tammy.

Her arms were so frail that she couldn't carry even the lightest shopping bag, so she used a shopping trolley. And she *so* hated being seen with it – she said it made her look old!

So here she sat, resting on a park bench because she could walk only a few hundred metres at a time, without getting completely tired out. Her grandson, freckle-faced Willard, whom she called Willie, for short, had accompanied her to the park, but he'd left her to rest while he played football with some of his mates, a few metres away. Willard wore, as he always did, a football shirt in the red and white stripes of his local League team.

Suddenly . . . a beam of blue light shot out of nowhere, it seemed, and struck the little old lady. It engulfed her and the seat, for about a minute, and then it faded and disappeared, as suddenly as it had appeared.

And it was then that Granny Smith began to feel peculiar. And it was that one minute which

changed her life completely. For that was the start of SUPER GRAN . . .

It was also just about then that the girl, Edison Faraday Black, appeared on the scene. She came rushing down a grassy slope towards Granny Smith, shouted something excitedly . . . and then tripped, as she always seemed to do, fell and rolled headlong down the slope, ending up at Granny Smith's feet.

The auburn-haired girl stood up and dusted herself down. 'Are you all right, lady?' she asked, concerned. 'I saw the ray hit you and . . .'

Granny Smith, feeling *most* peculiar by now, put her hand to her head. 'Aye . . . I . . . I think so, lassie . . .'

The little old lady wasn't really sure. What *was* happening, she wondered. For something definitely *was* happening to her. Something strange. She could feel it in her bones; she could feel it all through her thin, frail body.

'It was that rotter, the Inventor, I *know* it was, it must have been,' Edison said, as she looked all around, towards the dozen or so large houses

nearby which backed on to the public park. 'I know he lives round about here *some*where.' She frowned. 'And I've *almost* caught up with him. I just wish I knew which house was his.' She looked determined. 'But I'll *find* him, don't worry!'

Granny Smith couldn't take all this nonsense in. Not right then. She felt faint. Then, suddenly, she felt the opposite – 'un-faint' – whatever *that* meant, she thought.

She felt terrible, and then, suddenly, she felt great! It was all very mysterious, and confusing. So she was too concerned with all these mixed feelings to be bothered listening to the girl's ramblings – or her 'bletherings' as she, Granny Smith, would have called them.

Her eyes, her ears, her bones, joints, limbs all seemed to be 'popping'. It was decidedly odd. It wasn't so much 'pains' she was having, it was 'sniap', she thought.

'"Sniap"? What's "sniap"?' she wondered, out loud.

'Pardon?' Edison frowned.

Granny Smith giggled. '"Sniap" is "pains" backwards! The *opposite* of "pains",' she explained to

the girl. 'I'm having lots of lovely "sniap"!' She had just invented the word and was extremely proud of her cleverness. She could never have thought of anything like that before this happened.

She had a kind of mist in front of her eyes, so she pulled her glasses off – and found she could see perfectly! She threw them away and they landed on the nose of a little white poodle, sniffing around some bushes . . . FIFTY METRES AWAY!

She listened. She could hear the boys' shouts deafeningly loud; she could hear the sparrows in the distant treetops, chirping as if they were sitting on her shoulder! So she pulled her hearing aid off and tossed it away, too. And it hit the little bespectacled poodle on the head!

Granny Smith stood up, smiled – and bent down to touch her toes; something she hadn't been able to do for about thirty years!

'Are . . . are you *sure* you're all right?' Edison asked, frowning. 'Oh! Careful! What're you doing?' She moved towards Granny Smith to steady, or catch her, if she fell.



But the little old lady didn't need her help. 'I'm . . . I'm not sure, lassie,' she said, as she straightened up. Then she grinned, hugely. 'Aye . . . aye . . . I *am* sure. I *am* all right. I'm *more* than all right. I'm terrific! Yippee!'

She yelled with delight, did a little jig, kicked her heels together, threw her tartan tammy into the air, jumped about . . . and threw her walking stick away! 'I won't be needing *that* thing again!'

The little white poodle, glasses on its nose and the hearing aid strung over its back, saw the stick flying towards it . . . and ran for its life!

Things were happening too quickly for Edison, however. Only a few minutes ago she'd been hovering at the top of the grassy slope, near the park railings, when she'd seen Granny Smith walking slowly and painfully along, leaning on her walking stick and clutching at the arm of her grandson, who had been trailing the shopping trolley along. And now, after only one little shot from the machine's ray, Edison was looking at a miracle! 'So it *does* work on people!' she murmured to herself.

She felt a surge of pride in her father, at the thought of his machine working; it definitely *was* a Super-machine! But then she had another surge – of anger, for the hated Inventor, who had stolen it from him.

Edison came out of her daydream when she realised that Granny Smith was looking towards the boys, and was saying, 'I'm away to have a game of football, lassie! Are you coming?' Her eyes gleamed.

'Oh no!' the girl gasped. 'Maybe you're not . . . uh . . . I mean, maybe you're not strong enough yet for that, and besides . . .'

'Blethers!' The old lady took off her heavy winter coat and threw it over the bench; and the scarf followed. Then she put her tartan tammy on at a jaunty angle, as she ran to join the boys. 'Of *course* I'm strong enough for a silly wee game of football. Who says I'm not! What d'you think I am . . . a little old lady?'

'But you *are* a little old la . . . !' The girl shrugged. What was the use?

Edison picked up the coat and scarf, took the handle of the trolley, and started to trot after the old lady. She knew she would never catch up with her, for Granny Smith was now giving a good imitation of an Olympic sprinter, as she sped towards the boys.

As she trotted, Edison tried to explain. 'It was my dad, you see . . . at least, to begin with . . . then the budgie escaped . . . and that rotten Inventor pinched it . . . the machine, I mean, not the budgie! . . . and it was *he* who must've hit you with the Super-ray just now . . . and it was the ray which made you . . .'

But the girl was muttering to herself, for Granny Smith was now hundreds of metres away, catching up with the boys' game of football.

The old lady reached the boys and she threw herself forward in a sliding tackle, the way she'd seen footballers on the telly doing. Her foot touched the ball and nudged it away from the boy who had it.

'Come on, laddie, give us a wee kick at your ball!' she said.

'Eh?' the boy gasped.

Willard, nearby, was also taken aback. 'Hey! Gran?' But only for a second. Then he recovered his wits and went flying after her, in hot pursuit.

Willard was football mad. He would play football any*where*, with any*thing* for a ball, and with any*one*! He'd play with boys, men, girls . . . grannies, even!

'Hey! Gran! Come back!' he yelled, as he chased her. As if she would! A miracle had happened and Willard's little old granny was chasing a football; and nothing, and no one, would stop her!

'Come on, Willie laddie – catch me!' she challenged him.

The faster Willard ran after his gran, the faster she ran away from him, dribbling about, the ball at her feet as if it were tied to her old-fashioned shoelaces.

Willard at last caught up with her and was just about to get his foot to the ball, when the old lady neatly sidestepped and dribbled it away from him again. The boy went slithering on, stopped,

came back . . . and his gran beat him again! He just couldn't get *near* the ball, let alone get it away from her.

After five or six attempts, Willard began to get a bit annoyed. For Willard was a very good footballer. He played for his school team and his boys' club team . . . and he wasn't used to being out-dribbled, out-played and out-manoeuvred in a game. Especially by an old lady! Especially in front of his mates. That was the embarrassing part of it. That's what really annoyed him.

So, forgetting for the moment *who* she was, he gave his opponent an extra fierce shoulder charge, knocking her off balance.

'Hey! Foul, ref!' Granny Smith cried, and then, regaining her balance, she decided that two could play rough!

She nudged him – gently, she thought! – with her bony shoulder . . . and sent him flying through the air! 'Take that, Willie, you scunner!' she grinned. And poor Willard crashed to the ground, winded – ten metres away!

'Oof!' he groaned.

'Oh, I'm sorry, Willie,' Gran apologised, eyes twinkling, as she ran to help him to his feet. 'Are you all right, son?'

'Y-yes th-thanks,' Willard stammered, not hurt – but surprised!

He had never seen anything like this before, and neither had his mates, who could only stand and stare, open-mouthed, unable to believe their eyes! A granny – a frail old weak old granny who could play football like that. She was super!

His chest puffed out with pride, Willard grinned over at his mates. He was proud of her. 'I'm goin' to get you into my teams, Gran,' he said, forgetting he'd have a job getting a little old lady into boys' football teams! Especially his school team!

Just then, Edison came running up to the group. Running wasn't something she was good at – tripping was more in her line! – and Willard, his gran and the boys had easily left her behind. Besides, hadn't she had to struggle along with the old lady's trolley and coat?

'Are you all right?' Edison asked, sure the old lady couldn't possibly be.

'Sure. Fine, thanks!' Willard replied. 'Just a bit winded.' He grinned. 'Hey! I'm goin' to get Gran into my football teams, and . . .'

'Not *you,* stupid!' Edison retorted, glaring at him. 'I meant the old lady.' She turned to her. 'Are *you* all right?'

Granny Smith looked puzzled. 'Who – me?' She stood there, quietly tapping the ball back and forward from one foot to the other. 'Jings, lassie, why shouldn't I be? What's wrong with me?'

'Well . . . I mean . . . all that running about, playing football and . . . and everything. I mean, well . . . you *are* an old lady, you know . . .' Edison was worried in case the old lady strained herself.

'An old lady!' Granny Smith was indignant. 'Blethers! I'm as fit as *you* are.' She looked Edison up and down, and thought better of what she had said. 'In fact, lassie, I'm a lot fitter! But don't ask me to explain how it happened!'

'But *I* can tell you . . .' Edison began.

But Granny Smith wasn't listening. She gave the ball a hefty kick. 'Come on, laddies, who's for another wee game, eh?'

The ball went flying hundreds of metres through the air . . . towards a certain terrified, little white poodle!

'And this time,' Granny Smith grinned at Edison, 'I want *every*one to join in!'

'Oh no!' Edison groaned.

'Oh, and by the way,' Granny Smith commanded, 'from now on I want you all to call me SUPER GRAN. Cos that's what I am, amn't I? A Super Gran!'

And that was just the *start* of the adventures of SUPER GRAN.