

Diana Wynne Jones

Stopping for
*
** a Spell

THREE MAGICAL FANTASIES



Stopping for
*
** a Spell

江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

東京千代田区神田保町二丁目十六番地
鈴木・モリエイジエンシー
電話(代)二三〇一四〇八一

Other titles by Diana Wynne Jones

Chrestomanci Series

Charmed Life*

The Magicians of Caprona*

Witch Week*

The Lives of Christopher Chant*

Mixed Magics*

Black Maria*

A Tale of Time City

Howl's Moving Castle*

Castle in the Air*

The Homeward Bounders

Archer's Goon*

Eight Days of Luke

Dogsbody

Power of Three

Wilkins' Tooth

For older readers

Fire and Hemlock

Hexwood

The Time of the Ghost

For younger readers

Wild Robert

*Also available on tape


Stopping for * * a Spell

Diana Wynne Jones



ILLUSTRATED BY CHRIS MOULD

Collins
VOYAGER

 *An imprint of HarperCollins Publishers*

For more information about the author and her work,
visit her website at: www.dianawynnejoness.com

Chair Person first published in Great Britain by
Hamish Hamilton Children's Books, 1989
The Four Grannies first published in Great Britain by
Hamish Hamilton Children's Books, 1980
Who Got Rid of Angus Flint? first published in Great Britain
as 'The Fearsome Friend' in *Young Winters Tales* 6 by
Macmillan London Ltd, 1975

First published in USA as a collection, *Stopping for a Spell*,
by Greenwillow Books 1993

First published in Great Britain as a collection in
paperback by CollinsVoyager 2002
CollinsVoyager is an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers Ltd,
77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith,
London, W6 8JB

The HarperCollins website address is:
www.fireandwater.com

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Stopping for a Spell collection © Diana Wynne Jones 1993
Chair Person text © Diana Wynne Jones 1989
The Four Grannies text © Diana Wynne Jones 1980
Who Got Rid of Angus Flint? text © Diana Wynne Jones 1975

Illustrations by Chris Mould 2002

ISBN 0 00 711217 3

The author and illustrator assert the moral right to be
identified as the author and illustrator of the work.

Printed and bound in England
by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Conditions of Sale

This book is sold subject to the condition
that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise,
be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated
without the publisher's prior written consent in any form
of binding or cover other than that in which it is
published and without a similar condition
including this condition being imposed
on the subsequent purchaser.

★ Contents



Chair Person

1. Auntie Christa's Box	9
2. Something in the Garden Shed	17
3. A Busy Night	28
4. Coffee Morning	36
5. Junk Shop	44
6. Party Games	56

The Four Grannies

1. Erg Gets an Idea	73
2. More Grannies Arrive	79
3. Emily Gets Converted	86
4. A Large Yellow Teddy Bear	91
5. How to Keep Four Grannies Busy	97
6. Erg's Invention Works	104
7. Supergranny	111

Who Got Rid of Angus Flint?

1. Angus Flint Arrives	123
2. The Smell in the Night	129
3. Roller Skates and Stew	134
4. Cream Teas	141
5. Angus Flint's Revenge	147
6. The Tables Turn	152

Chair Person





CHAPTER ONE

Auntie Christa's Box

What happened to the old striped armchair was Auntie Christa's fault.

The old chair had stood in front of the television for as long as Simon and Marcia could remember. As far as they knew, the cushion at the top had always been tipped sideways and it had never been comfortable to sit in. The seat was too short for Dad and too low for Mum and too high for Simon or

Marcia. Its arms were the wrong shape for putting things on. Perhaps that was why there was a coffee stain on one arm and a blot of ink on the other. There was a sticky brown patch on the seat where Simon and Marcia had once had a fight for the ketchup bottle. Then, one evening, the sideways cushion at the top wore out. Whatever the chair was stuffed with began to ooze out in a spiky brown bush.

“The armchair’s grown a beard,” said Simon.

“It looks as if someone’s smashed a hedgehog on it,” Marcia said.

Dad stood and looked at it. “Let’s get rid of it,” he said. “I’ve never liked it, anyway. I tell you what – we can sit the guy in it on Guy Fawkes night. That will make a really good bonfire.”

Marcia thought this was a very good idea. Now she thought about it, she had never liked that chair either. The purple and orange and pale blue stripes on it never seemed to go with anything else in the room. Simon was not so sure. He always liked things that he *knew*, and he had known that chair all his life. It seemed a shame to burn it on the bonfire. He was glad when Mum objected.

“Oh, you can’t throw it out!” Mum said. “It’s got such a personality!”

“But it’s worn out,” said Dad. “It wasn’t new when we bought it. We can afford to buy a much nicer one now.”

They argued about it, until Simon began to feel sorry for the old chair and even Marcia felt a little guilty about burning a chair that was old enough to have a personality.

“Couldn’t we just sell it?” she asked.

“Don’t *you* start!” said Dad. “Even the junk shop wouldn’t want a mucky old thing like—”

At that moment Auntie Christa came in. Auntie Christa was not really an auntie, but she liked everyone to call her that. As usual, she came rushing in through the kitchen, carrying three carrier bags and a cardboard box and calling, “Coo-ee! It’s me!” When she arrived in the living room, she sank down into the striped armchair and panted, “I just had to come in. I’m on my way to the Community Hall, but my feet are killing me. I’ve been all afternoon collecting prizes for the children’s party for the Caring Society on Saturday – I must have walked *miles*! But you wouldn’t *believe* what *wonderful* prizes people have given me. Just look.” She dumped her cardboard box on the arm of the chair – it was the arm with the ink

blot – in order to fetch a bright green teddy bear out of one of the carrier bags. She wagged the teddy in their faces. “Isn’t he *charming*?”

“So-so,” said Dad, and Marcia added, “Perhaps he’d look better without the pink ribbon.” Simon and Mum were too polite to say anything.

“And here’s such a lovely clockwork train!” Auntie Christa said, plunging the teddy back in the bag and pulling out a broken engine. “Isn’t it exciting? I can’t stay long enough to show you everything – I have to go and see to the music for the Senior Citizens’ Dance in a minute – but I think I’ve just got time to drink a cup of tea.”

“Of course,” Mum said guiltily. “Coming up.” She dashed into the kitchen.

Auntie Christa was good at getting people to do things. She was a very busy lady. Whatever went on at the Community Hall – whether it was Youth Club, Disco, Children’s Fancy Dress, Mothers’ Choir, Dog Training, Soup for the Homeless, or a Bring-and-Buy Sale – Auntie Christa was sure to be in the midst of it, telling people what to do. She was usually too busy to listen to what other people said. Mum said Auntie Christa was a wonder, but Dad quite often muttered

“Quack-quack-quack” under his breath when Auntie Christa was talking.

“Quack-quack,” Dad murmured as Auntie Christa went on fetching things out of her bags and telling them what good prizes they were. Auntie Christa had just got through all the things in the bags and was turning to the cardboard box on the arm of the chair when Mum came dashing back with tea and biscuits.

“Tea!” Auntie Christa said. “I can always rely on a cup of tea in this house!”

She turned gladly to take the tea. Behind her the box slid into the chair.

“Never mind,” said Auntie Christa. “I’ll show you what’s in there in a minute. It will thrill Simon and Marcia – oh, that reminds me! The African Aid Coffee Morning has to be moved this Saturday because the Stamp Collectors need the hall. I think we’ll have the coffee morning here instead. You can easily manage coffee and cakes for twenty on Saturday, can’t you?” she asked Mum. “Marcia and Simon can help you.”

“Well—” Mum began, while Dad looked truly dismayed.

“That’s settled, then,” said Auntie Christa, and quickly went on to talk about other things. Dad and

Simon and Marcia looked at one another glumly. They knew they were booked to spend Saturday morning handing round cakes and soothing Mum while she fussed. But it was worse than that.

“Now, you’ll never guess what’s in the box,” Auntie Christa said, cheerily passing her cup for more tea. “Suppose we make it a competition. Let’s say that whoever guesses wrong has to come and help me with the Caring Society party on Saturday afternoon.”

“I think we’ll all be busy—” Dad tried to say.

“No refusing!” Auntie Christa cried. “People are so wicked, the way they always try to get out of doing good deeds! You can have one guess each. And I’ll give you a clue. Old Mr Pennyfeather gave me the box.”

As old Mr Pennyfeather kept the junk shop, there could have been almost anything in the box. They all thought rather hard.

Simon thought the box had rattled as it tipped. “A tea set,” he guessed.

Marcia thought she had heard the box slosh. “A goldfish in a bowl,” she said.

Mum thought of something that might make a nice prize and guessed, “Dolls’ house furniture.”

Dad thought of the sort of things that were usually

in Mr Pennyfeather's shop and said, "Mixed-up jigsaws."

"You're all wrong, of course!" Auntie Christa said while Dad was still speaking. She sprang up and pulled the box back to the arm of the chair. "It's an old-fashioned conjuror's kit. Look. Isn't it thrilling?" She held up a large black top hat with a big shiny blue ball in it. Water – or something – was dripping out of the hat underneath. "Oh dear," Auntie Christa said. "I think the crystal ball must be leaking. It's made quite a puddle in your chair."

Dark liquid was spreading over the seat of the chair, mixing with the old ketchup stain.

"Are you sure you didn't spill your tea?" Dad asked.

Mum gave him a stern look. "Don't worry," she said. "We were going to throw the chair away, anyway. We were just talking about it when you came."

"Oh good!" Auntie Christa said merrily. She rummaged in the box again. "Look, here's the conjuror's wand," she said, bringing out a short white stick wrapped in a string of little flags. "Let's magic the nasty wet away so that I can sit down again." She tapped the puddle in the chair with the stick. "There!"

“The puddle hasn’t gone,” said Dad.

“I thought you were going to throw the hideous old thing away, anyway,” Auntie Christa said crossly. “You should be quite ashamed to invite people for a coffee morning and ask them to sit in a chair like this!”

“Then perhaps,” Dad said politely, “you’d like to help us carry the chair outside to the garden shed?”

“I’d love to, of course,” Auntie Christa said, hurriedly putting the hat and the stick back into the box and collecting her bags, “but I must dash. I have to speak to the Vicar before I see about the music. I’ll see you all at the Caring Society party the day after tomorrow at four-thirty sharp. Don’t forget!”

This was a thing Simon and Marcia had often noticed about Auntie Christa. Though she was always busy, it was always other people who did the hard work.