

## Bubblehead Bedlam!

Daddy turned on the radio, then headed to the back sink to wash *three doo-doo* heads of hair. Momma filled the kitchen sink with steamin' hot water in order to wash the *filthy, dirty*, good kitchen towels. To lather up Grandma's homemade lye soap, she used a washcloth and vigorously rubbed both together. Diane helped wash down the kitchen table, chairs, countertops, and the telephone.

After Daddy finished washin' my hair, I wrapped it in a towel like a turban. "Momma, what's that big word you used to describe what just happened? It had somethin' to do with a pot or pan!"

Momma giggled, "Do you mean *pandemonium*?"

"Yes, that's it - *pan-de-mon-i-um!*"

I ran to the living room, grabbed the dictionary from the bookshelf, dashed back to the kitchen, and turned to the "P" section. Frustrated, I spoke, "Momma, I have a *dilemma*. Noah did a great job with the big book but sometimes, I do declare, I get frustrated. I can hardly say the word *pandemonium* - let alone spell it. How does Noah expect me to look it up in the first place?"

“You’ve got a point. Maybe Noah didn’t want you to grow up too fast. Besides, if you knew how to spell every word, you wouldn’t need me!”

We both smiled. She flipped through the pages, findin’ it before I could say, “*Fiddlesticks and gumdrop bars!*” Together, we spelled, “P-A-N-D-E-M-O-N-I-U-M - pandemonium!”

Momma read from Noah Webster’s dictionary.

<p><b>Pan·de·mo·ni·um</b> / pan-duh-moh-nee-uhm / <i>noun</i> 1: uproar, utter confusion 2: bedlam</p>
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“Momma, what’s bedlam?”

“If the opposite of pandemonium is peace and quiet, bedlam would be . . .”



No sooner did Momma say “*bedlam*” than there *was* bedlam. Daddy and Duane appeared in the kitchen lookin’ like twin *Mr. Bubbles*. Radio turned up full blast, Daddy sang along, beltin’ out Diane’s favorite song, “Rockin’ Robin.”



Daddy gave Momma *goo-goo eyes*, grabbed her in his arms, and twirled her around in circles. The twirlin' made Daddy's bubbles bop, surroundin' us in a sea of bubbles. It reminded me of Grandma Brombaugh's favorite television show – *The Lawrence Welk Show*. Duane, Diane, and I joined in the boppin',

*Rockin' robin (tweet tweet tweet)*  
*Rockin' robin (tweet tweet tweet)*  
*Oh rockin' robin, well you really gonna rock tonight!*

Grandma Brombaugh and Ronald appeared in the doorway. "What's goin' on here?" Grandma asked.

Diane chuckled, "*Just a widdle panda moment!*"

"Diane, not a *panda moment* – pandemonium," explained Daddy as he lifted Diane up onto Ronald's shoulders.

Daddy swung me up over his head for a *bird's-eye view*. Grandma and Ronald joined in. Song over, Daddy *flapped his wings* and bellowed,

**"Cock-a-doodle-do,  
cock-a-doodle-do,  
cock-a-doodle-*DOO-DOO!*"**

Everyone laughed except Momma and Grandma. Momma changed the subject and asked, “Breakfast anyone?”

We all pitched in. Settin’ the table, I whispered somethin’ to Daddy. “What are you two up to?” questioned Momma.

Daddy winked and responded, “Nothing, Jean, nothing at all!”

Nobody could keep a straight face. Daddy and Duane “wore” their *bubblehead* look to the breakfast table. Grandma and Ronald got their ears filled with a play-by-play of this mornin’s event. Grandma said, “It sounds as though you had quite a dilemma! Ronda, do you remember what *dilemma* means?”

“I do, and I’ll *never* forget it!”

We read from Noah Webster’s Dictionary.

<p><b>di·lem·ma</b> / di-lem-uh / <i>noun</i> 2 b: a problem seemingly incapable of a satisfactory solution</p>
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“That’s exactly what we’ve had today. When Grandma’s in the middle of a dilemma, she likes to say, ‘*We’re in a pickle.*’”

Everyone laughed except for Diane. Eyebrows lifted, Diane was confused and blurted out, “*Dat hafta be a big pickle!*”

Momma clarified, “Diane, it’s not a real pickle. Grandma means a pickle is a problem. Our problem or pickle: birds *in* the house that needed to be *out* of the house.”

I added, “And faced with a pickle or a problem, we should never give up.”

I looked down. Grandma’s angel costume was showin’. I looked up. I saw a light glowin’ from under her hat - a *halo!* It was time to be enlightened. Grandma shared, “The Friend family learned a valuable lesson in perseverance today. When you’re under pressure or *in a pickle*, don’t panic in the moment! Keep on holding on, never give up, and persevere to the very end!”

Wisdom comes so naturally to an undercover angel.

“*Hey!* I almost forgot. Today’s our *hay* day,” Daddy teased.

“Daddy, I’ve got the tractor, baler, and wagon all hooked up,” beamed Ronald.

I crossed my fingers, put them behind my back, took a deep breath, then begged, “Daddy, can I help this time?”

“Sorry, sweetheart! You’re still too young. But you can watch from the hillside, then help later when we put the bales up in the haymow.”

As though to distract me, Momma bent down and whispered in my ear, “Don’t forget our little secret we have for Daddy tonight.”

“What are you two up to now?” Daddy asked.

With our palms in the air, we both shrugged our shoulders and lowered our lips.

*Mr. Bubblehead* winked, then leaned over and gave Momma a kiss on the cheek. A tiny bubble landed on her nose. I covered my eyes with my hands and peeked through my fingers. Daddy kissed her nose. The bubble disappeared. I wished I could have, too.

Daddy slapped his forehead with his hand and chuckled, “I’m such a *birdbrain!* Duane and Ronda, have you fed the chickens and gathered the eggs?”

Duane shouted, “*Cheesy pizza!*” as, simultaneously, I shouted, “*Fiddlesticks and gumbdrop bars!*”

“Now both of you have funny sayings,” Daddy laughed and added, “By the way, Jean, you’re not the only one with a secret.”

Daddy pulled two clothespins from his pocket. He placed one on his lips and one on mine.