

## Ronda's Not-So-Neat Secret

My not-so-sweet surprise from Tilly was a big-old-fat black eye! “I’ve had it with Tilly Winks! I’m runnin’ out of patience! Where’s the paddle? She’s gonna *hafta* get a spankin’!”

### “HOLD YOUR HORSES!”

After a face wash, Momma placed a bag of ice on my swollen eye as she explained, “Tilly didn’t do it on purpose. I’m sure it was only an accident!”

Daddy passed through the kitchen and chuckled. “Seems like both Duane and Ronda are like accidents waiting to happen. Birds of a feather flock together. I’m amazed Ronda doesn’t have a turkey caught in her throat, too.”

Ronald hollered, “She would except her thumb would get in the way!”

“Momma, make Ronald take that back! I’m tryin’ to stop. Somehow my big old thumb ends up in my big - I mean - my mouth when I’m upset or worried!”

Ronald interrupted, “You twirl your hair, too! You must worry a lot.”

“Stop teasin’ me, Ronald. I can’t help but worry. Duane’s in turkey trouble! We *hafta* get him to the doctor. Duane and I do our share of fussin’ ’n’ fightin’, but deep down inside we love each other - deep as the deep blue ocean!”

“According to the *World Book Encyclopedia*, the ocean is more than six miles deep,” boasted Ronald. “There’s no way you love each other that much.”

“Ronald and Ronda - that’s enough, you two! Grandma’s here,” Mother instructed. “Help her with the groceries.”

Grandma dropped in to baby-sit Diane and to help us make her homemade ice cream. In her bag was the secret ingredient. I’d tell you what it is, but then it wouldn’t be a secret anymore!

Grandma Brombaugh knelt down for a kiss and a hug. Before she asked about my black eye, I answered, "Pioneer Tilly Winks Tilly's not-so-sweet surprise. Tilly didn't mean to do it. It was an accident."

I watched as Momma and Grandma started whisperin'. My ears aren't big enough. WHAT'S THE BIG SECRET? Where's "Miss Hawkephant," my baby sister, when I need her? Oops! There she goes playin' her favorite game - hide 'n' seek.

*"Disappear, Diane! Don't you speak.  
You hide and in awhile we'll seek.  
Hide in the clothes hamper, behind the door,  
in the closet or under the bed on the floor.  
Disappear, Diane! We won't peek.  
Hide yourself, you little pipsqueak."*

Diane giggled. Diane disappeared.

The secret conversation was over. Momma left the room as Grandma folded her hands and looked up. I looked down at her slip - showin' again! She whispered a prayer which only proves my point. Grandma IS an angel - an undercover angel! You'd think as an angel she would pray for my big-old-fat black eye to disappear.



Grandma asked if I had eaten breakfast and then handed me a left-over deviled egg, tightly wrapped in plastic. In the meantime, Ronald pocketed peanut butter fudge from the tin can on the back porch. It didn't work this time. Grandma caught him red-handed and warned, "Ronald, you should be eating fruit or cereal - not candy. Remember, you are what you eat. Diane, ready or not, here I come!"

My eyeballs almost came out of my head! If you are what you eat, why did Grandma give ME a deviled egg? I didn't care. I was hungry, but I couldn't get the egg unwrapped. Impatient, I shouted, "Grandma, help me with this egg. I'm in a hurry. *We hafta* get Duane to the doctor. IT'S AN EMERGENCY!!!"

Grandma returned with Diane, "*the angel*," in her arms. She helped me with my deviled egg and pleaded, "Honey, have a little patience. There's no need to worry - no need to hurry."

"Why is it grandparents never seem to hurry or worry?"

Ronald butted in. "It's because they've lived a long, long, llllooonnnnggg time."

Grandma added, "Long enough to know hurrying and worrying never get you anywhere."

# “P.U. What’s that smell?”

I hollered.

Daddy walked in with a familiar odor - pig perfume! He looked at the clock. “Ronald, it’s time we get the truckload of pigs to market. Give Ronda a hug. Tell her how much you love her.”

Ronald hugged me and muttered, “I love you as deep as the skin on a flea!”

Daddy asked, “What did you say, Ronald?”

With his hands over his heart, Ronald changed his tune and crooned, “I love you as deep as the deep blue sea!”

“How sweet is that!” Daddy said.

Pig stench filled the air as Daddy fiddled around in his pocket; then he disappeared. The pig perfume didn’t. DOUBLE P.U.! Clothespin your nose! Momma’s not gonna like havin’ Daddy’s overalls stinkin’ up the place.



Without warnin', the strangest noise filled the air as well. Clothespin your ears! Clothespins surely come in handy around here!

**G1u-g1u-g1u-gobble-g1u-g1u-g1u-gobble!!!**

Ronald announced, "It's a turkey - not a real one. Daddy is tryin' out his new turkey caller on Duane. He's such a joker!"

Most of the time, Ronald is as serious as an operation. Grandma says my brother is a genius 'cause he loves to read. Daddy nicknamed him, *Mr. World Book WORM Encyclopedia*.

Ronald boasted, "A male turkey, called a tom, begins to grow red danglin' things from his throat, called wattles."

"Wattle?" I snickered, "Wattle you talkin' about?"



“Funny, so funny! Turkeys grow snoods on their foreheads.”

“A *snood*?”

“A snood is like a long pointing nose.”

“Pinocchio’s?”

“Ronda, not as long as Pinocchio’s nose, but I get your point!”

Ronald snickered, cleared his throat and continued his turkey talk! “A turkey’s head turns shades of red, white and blue. Toms grow beards that grow up to five inches a year. In three years their beards can be over . . . ”

Turkey talk terminated. Daddy walked by, shrugged his shoulders, and whispered in my ear, “Say a little prayer. Momma is going to need your help watching Duane. Don’t let him fly the coop before his doctor’s appointment!”

Fly the coop? What’s that about? Now, where was I? Ronald followed Daddy out the back door like a shadow. Daddy was tryin’ to cheer up Duane. It didn’t work. I had a better idea. I pocketed a piece of Grandma’s fudge and dashed to Duane’s room. I passed Momma on the stairs. She didn’t look very happy. Was it Daddy’s pig p.u. or Duane’s turkey trouble?

*Fiddlesticks and gumdrop bars!* Those bad thoughts are back! I didn't mind if Duane got a small shot in the arm or even a shot in the *you-know-where* with a huge, long needle, but not an *OPERATION!*

I opened the door, took one look at Duane, and a lightbulb went off in my head. You are what you eat. *You are what you eat. YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT!!!*

“OOOOOOOH  
NOOOOOO!!!!”

I slammed the door shut, ran downstairs, and burst through the front door. *Fiddlesticks and gumdrop bars!* Daddy's gone. But I know he knows Duane's secret too - *birds of a feather - the turkey caller - fly the coop!* Daddy should have done something. He's a veterinarian! I *hafta* keep Duane's secret a secret. Daddy's countin' on me to take care of Momma and Duane.



I didn't want Grandma to worry, too! What am I thinkin'? Grandma is too old to worry. Besides, her mission as an angel is to keep other people from worryin'. Most likely Grandma already knows my secret - I mean Duane's secret. He can't help it. Poor Duane is an accident waitin' to happen!

*"Wonda! Wanna pway hide 'n' sneak?"*

Diane's *babblin'* again! Now is not a good time. She's really tryin' my patience. My fingers flopped in my hair. I started twirlin' as fast as I could. I'm not tellin' anybody my secret - not even "Miss Hawkephant." Diane tugged on my overalls and pleaded again, "*Wonda, wanna pway hide 'n' sneak?*"

*"OK, OK! Disappear, Diane! Don't you speak.  
You hide and in awhile we'll seek.  
Hide in the clothes hamper, behind the door,  
in the closet or under the bed on the floor.  
Disappear, Diane! We won't peek.  
Hide somewhere, you little pipsqueak."*

Diane giggled. Diane disappeared.

"Ready or not - here I come!"

I found my fudge-faced sister on the back porch. After cleanin' up the evidence of her misbehavior, I snuck a piece of fudge myself while Diane disappeared - *again*.