

LITTLE OLD MAN

Come closer to me, little boy. Come right up close to me, and I will show you something wonderful. (The LOM hobbles a step or two nearer to JAMES, then puts a hand into the pocket of his jacket and takes out a small, white paper bag. He whispers.) You see this? (He waves the bag in front of JAMES' face.) You know what this is, my dear? You know what's inside this little bag? (He comes still closer to JAMES, so close that he is only a few inches away.) Take a look, my dear. (He opens the bag and lets JAMES look inside.) *Listen* to them! Listen to them move! There's more power and magic in these little green things than in all the rest of the world put together.

JAMES

But... but... what are they? (He pauses.) Where do they come from?

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AH-ha... you'd never guess that! (He suddenly jumps back and begins waving his stick madly in the air.) Crocodile tongues! One thousand long, slimy crocodile tongues boiled up in the skull of a dead witch for twenty days and nights with the eyeballs of a lizard! Add the fingers of a young monkey, the gizzard of a pig, the beak of a green parrot, the juice of a porcupine, and three spoonfuls of sugar. Stew for another week, and then let the moon do the rest! (He pushes the white bag into JAMES' hand.) *Here*. You take it! It's *yours*. (He pauses.) And now, all you've got to do is this. Take a large jug of water, and pour all the little green things into it. Then, very slowly, one by one, add ten hairs from your own head. That sets them off! In a couple of minutes the water will begin to froth and bubble furiously, and as soon as that happens you must quickly drink it all down, the whole jugful, in one gulp. And *then*, my dear, you will feel it churning and boiling in your stomach, and steam will start coming out of your mouth, and immediately after that, *marvelous* things will start happening to you, *fabulous, unbelievable* things – and you will never be miserable again in your life. Because you are miserable, aren't you? You needn't tell me! I know all about it! Now, off you go and do exactly as I say. Don't let those green things in there get away from you. Because if they do escape, then they will be working their magic upon somebody else instead of upon you! *Whoever they meet first, be it bug, insect, animal, or tree, that will be the one who gets the full power of their magic!* So, hold the bag tight! Off you go! Hurry up! Don't wait! Now's the time! Hurry!