

Translated extract from

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**Elisabeth Steinkellner /  
Michael Roher (illustrator)  
*The new Granny***

Translated by Helena Ragg-Kirkby

My old Granny always used to grumble about my hairstyle.

"Fini, what have you done to your lovely hair *this* time?" she would sigh, shaking her head in despair.



Then she would put a bobble-hat on me, and would take me to to the park. There, we would feed the ducks and dream of faraway lands. My old Granny was always travelling, and she'd send me postcards from all over the place. And once she was back home, she was always cooking exotic food.

For she was a fantastic cook, my old Granny was.  
One of her meals would put Mum and Dad in a  
good mood for the rest of the day.

My new Granny is different.  
My new Granny admires my hair.  
"You look so pretty, Fini," she says, stroking my  
hair.  
My new Granny eats the stale breadcrumbs  
instead of feeding them to the ducks.



My new Granny can't go travelling any more either. A couple of weeks ago, she packed her suitcase for the last time, to leave her apartment and move in with Mum and Dad and me. Now her favourite thing is sitting in the armchair in her room, telling me stories about her younger days. As she talks, she smiles and looks out of the window with an odd expression on her face.



A couple of days ago, my new Granny switched all the cooker rings on. Not to cook, but to warm her hands. Since then, we've had a big notice up in the kitchen saying "Granny - please don't turn the cooker rings on!" And Mum looks worried and is forever saying "We all need to keep an eye on Granny, Fini."

Today it's my turn to keep an eye on Granny while Mum pops round to our neighbour's house. We drink hot chocolate together, and I read her stories about witches. Granny laughs merrily, but then she shuts her eyes and starts to snore. So I go into my room and sort out my crayons.



"Fini!" I suddenly hear Mum calling.

"Fini, where are you?"

When I get to the kitchen, Granny is lying under the dining table. Her legs are splayed out, and she is snoring.

"I was only in my room for a minute," I said, trying to defend myself.  
But Mum is angry. "I thought I could rely on you, Fini! We agreed that we'd all pull together!"  
Granny shuts her eyes and giggles.  
"What's so funny?" I snap at her. Then I turn on Mum "And why does it have to be me that looks after Granny? She ought to look after herself!"  
Mum just glares at me.  
I'm going to punish Granny by not reading her a bedtime story tonight.



The next morning, there's a strange woman in the living room with Mum.

"This is Agatha," Mum says. "From now on she'll be taking care of Granny for a couple of hours every day."

I follow Agatha into Granny's room and watch her as she helps Granny to dress.

"Agatha," I say, "the doctors at the hospital said it was almost a miracle that we had a new Granny. A miracle that she woke up again." Agatha smiles and nods.

"You're a miracle," I say to Granny, and she laughs and strokes my hair.

Once Granny is dressed, I go into the kitchen with her. She sits down and starts to eat her porridge, but her spoon doesn't quite want to go into her mouth. I watch her for a while, then I go and sit next to her and we do it together. Agatha comes in waving a comb. "Hair time!" "I'll do it," I say. Granny nods her agreement.



I love my Granny. The new one just as much as the old one. Every Sunday morning I'm allowed to do Granny's hair. Then, together, we admire ourselves in the mirror.