

HARRY AND THE TERRIBLE WHATZIT

DICK GACKENBACH

I Knew there was something terrible down in the cellar. I just knew, because the cellar was dark and damp and it smelled.

"Don't go down there," I told my mother.

"Why?" she asked.

"There is something terrible down there."

"I have to go down in the cellar," she said. "We need a jar of pickles."

She never believes me! I waited and waited and waited at the cellar door. She never came back up. Someone had to do something, so I took a broom and went down the cellar steps. It was very black and gloomy. And it smelled.

"I know there is something here," I called out.

"What did you do with my mother?"

Then I saw it! A double-headed, three-clawed, six-toed, long-horned Whatzit.

It was hiding behind the furnace.

"Where is my mother?" I asked it.

"The last time I saw your mother," the Whatzit said,

"she was over by the pickle jars, Runt,"

I was sure the Whatzit was lying. "What did you do with her?" I shouted, and gave it a swat with the broom. WHAM!

That made the Whatzit really mad and it came after me.

I swung the broom again. WHAM! The Whatzit didn't like that at all.

It climbed up on the washer and I hit it right where it sits down.

I noticed the Whatzit was getting smaller. And when I pulled its tail, it got even smaller. Now the Whatzit was down to my size.

"Okay, you better tell me what you did with my mother," I said. "Or else!"

"Kid you're crazy," the Whatzit answered. One o the heads made a face at me.

Just for that I twisted a nose, and the Whatzit. Shank some more. "Why are you getting so small?" I asked.

"Because you aren't afraid of me anymore," the Whatzit said. "That always happens just when I'm beginning to feel at home in a closet or a cellar." The Whatzit looked very sad.

The Whatzit got smaller and smaller. Just when it was about the size of a peanut, I called out.

"Try Sheldon Parker's cellar next door. He's afraid of everything."

"Thanks," I heard it say. Then the Whatzit was gone.

The Whatzit disappeared before it could tell me what it had done to my mother. I looked in the washer. She was not in there. I looked behind some boxes. My mother was not there either. I looked inside the wood bin. No mother there. I was worried. Then I found her glasses beside the pickle jars. But what had happened to the rest of her?

I was searching for more clues when I discovered the back cellar door was open. I looked outside and there in the bright sunlight.....

.....was my mother picking flowers. Boy, was I glad to see her.

"I found your glasses in the cellar," I said.

"Thank you, Harry," she said. "But I thought you were afraid of the cellar."

"Not anymore," I answered. "The terrible Whatzit is gone. I chased it away²⁰with the broom!"

"Well," she said, "I never saw a Whatzit down there." She never believes me.

I helped her carry the pickles into the kitchen where she gave me some milk and cookies.

"You know what Harry," my mother said. "I will never worry about a Whatzit as long as you are around." Maybe she did believe me.

Later I heard an awful yell coming from the house next door. I'll bet Sheldon looked in the cellar.