

Henry and the Hungry Hamper

by Jennifer Howard

Henry's had a messy day.
He splashed, he jumped, he rolled and played.
He wrote in books, dressed up the dog,
And on the wall he drew a frog.

He's wearing dinner, seconds too,
And for dessert some fruity goo.
It's come to live on his new shirt
Along with ketchup, mud, and dirt.

His father says, "It's a disgrace!
Look at your hands! Look at your face!"
And when Mom says "It's bath time, dear."
He just pretends he doesn't hear.

But moms, like time, do not relent
And up the stairs our boy is sent.
The stairs are dim. The landing's dark.
He creeps up, thinking of the park,

Where it's warm and bright and sunny.
Hey Mom! Yo, Dad! This isn't funny!
What's that noise? Is it a mouse?
Or just this big old creaky house?

But Mom is nowhere to be found,
And as for Dad, well, there's no sound

Except the distant TV roar
Of nightly news that's SUCH a bore,

Unless you're very, very old
And like to do as you are told.
Now Henry on the landing stares
At something in his room—*right there!*

The light's not on—it's hard to see—
He shuts his eyes and counts to three.
Is it a large and scaly dragon?
Or a bad guy in a wagon?

Could it be a pirate mean,
Or a Martian space machine,
A giant croc with growling tummy,
Or a wrapped Egyptian mummy?

Maybe some mutant cannibal
Is about to jump into the hall
And eat him up, from ears and nose
Right down to his tasty toes.

Where can he run? Where can he hide?
Down the hall he spins and slides.
Into Mom and Dad's room, quick!
Before the thing can take a lick.

He grabs Dad's sneakers, Mom's new pumps,
Sure to raise some nasty lumps.
The bedside clock, some magazines,
A brand-new tub of Vaseline,

A comb, a brush, two fluffy pillows,
A copy of "Wind in the Willows"—

Any ammo he can muster
From slippers to banana custard.

(What's that doing here we may
Consider on some other day.)

The thing gets closer, burps and belches.
Across the floor it slops and squelches.
Like a loathsome wiggly worm
It wriggles and squiggles, twists and squirms.

Get to the tub, boy! Faster, faster
If you want to skip disaster
He pelts it with his smelly socks,
Pretending that they're really rocks.

In go his shorts. There goes his shirt.
Now that monster's eating dirt.
Take that, Martian. Later, mummy!
This kid, you see, is not so yummy.

Squelching, belching, flipping, flopping
After him the horror's hopping.
Henry takes one mighty dive—
Did he make it? Is he alive?

Water, water, everywhere—
From the skylight to the stairs.
The soap is sunk, the towels soaked,
But Henry's saved! The monster's croaked!

It shudders. It shivers. It slips and shakes--
And collapses with a mighty quake
That's felt from Maine to Zanzibar,
And other places near and far.

So girls and boys, please do remember
Whether it's March, August, or September,
Never skip your nightly scrub
In a warm and sudsy tub.

Because even in the nicest room
There lurks a stinky sack of DOOM.
Your friendly laundry hamper may
Become your worst nightmare someday.

And if it does, there's just one
trick
To get you out of Henry's fix.
Wash, kids, wash! Get every part
From stem to stern, from stop to start.

And if your parents don't quite get
Why the bathroom floor's so wet,
Don't feel bad. They've just forgotten
That bathtime can be mighty rotten.

