

Chicken Soup by Jason Rhodes

After my grandma died, I inherited her house. She had a small cottage in the middle of nowhere. Her living room was cluttered with various stones and plants, but her kitchen was worse. She had a bookcase full of cookbooks that looked thousands of years old. Jars with mysterious contents cluttered the counters and every cabinet. The rest of the house seemed almost normal in comparison to the previous mentioned rooms.

Once I moved in, I cleaned everything up. The plants stayed where they were, but I moved the stones into the garden outside. The mystery jars had a new home in the back of the pantry so that they were no longer in the way. I replaced the decrepit grandma-style furniture with newer furniture.

I never considered that my grandma would be anything other than a grandma. But, oh boy, was I so very wrong. My thoughts about her changed when I decided to try to make her chicken soup. Grandma would always make it for my sisters and I whenever we got sick. I absolutely loved that soup as a kid! Why not try to make it? First mistake.

None of the cookbooks were labeled, so I searched a while for the recipe. After searching through about seven cookbooks, I finally found it: a hand-written recipe for chicken soup. The recipe seemed odd, but I assumed that's what made it delicious. It called for some of the items in the mysterious jars such as powdered pig heart and minced chicken intestines. I didn't think much about it, no matter how odd it sounded. Second mistake.

After I let the soup boil for as long as it said to, I added the final ingredient: a pinch of salt. Third mistake.

The pot rumbled and shook until the soup sloshed all over the floor. I tried to grab the handles on the pot to hold it in place, but it was too hot even through the potholders. The soup erupted straight into the ceiling and burst into a blinding light. I closed my eyes and stumbled back in shock.

When I opened my eyes there was someone, or something, standing in the middle of the kitchen. It turned to face me, a mask of horror on its face. It had three all-black eyes, large horns, and sharp teeth.

“How? How were you able to summon me?” it shouted in a deep voice, obviously annoyed by its sudden presence.

I flipped through grandma’s cookbook as fast as I could, screaming back, “I don’t know! You were supposed to be chicken soup!”

“Do you have any idea who I am? I was busy eating souls, and *you* just *had* to interrupt me!” it shouted. “How about I eat your soul Amelia?”

“Amelia? That’s my grandma’s name. What are you talking about?” I asked it, looking up from the cookbook.

“Wait, what?” it said, the anger draining from its voice. Its horns started to reverse back into its skull, and its teeth became less sharp. Its three eyes turned into two with the black fading

away to show brilliant blue eyes. It looked human, *too* human. “I’m so sorry. The only human that can summon me is Amelia. Where is she?”

“She died, I inherited her house,” I replied, looking back at the cookbook. “Now how do I send you back?”

“Well wouldn’t you like to know?” it said with a smirk. “Let me guess, you were trying to make chicken soup?”

“Yes.”

“I can help you with that. I mean, you did summon me, I might as well help,” it said.

It was hard to tell if I should have trusted it or not, but before I could give it an answer, it started to clean the mess. Afterwards, it went to the bookcase and picked out a spiral notebook.

“This is the real cookbook. The one you’re holding is a potions book,” it said without batting an eye. It then started to make the real chicken soup.

The chicken soup was wonderful, and exactly how I remembered it to be. The soup tasted so delicious, and I felt a bit of nostalgia for those days I would stay home from school sick and eat grandma’s chicken soup. I felt uneasy the whole time because this creature just sat there, not eating or saying a thing.

“So, what are you?” I asked it.

“A demon. I sold my soul and became immortal. Simple as that,” it replied with a grin too wide for its face.

“This soup is amazing! I never thought something like you could cook,” I said, trying to make small talk.

It just looked at me and said, “I have been the one making the chicken soup all those years. Amelia never really learned how to cook. Her favorite was always my chicken soup, so that became my nickname. That’s why the potion to summon me is titled ‘chicken soup’. You’ve really grown up, Daniela.”

Before I could ask anymore questions, it vanished into a cloud of smoke. I decided I would try to summon it again to learn more about my grandma. Why would she have a demon cooking for her?

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The next morning, I awoke to the smell of bacon and eggs. I got out of bed and walked around the unpacked boxes, until I finally realized that the boxes were gone. I looked around, and everything was in its proper place.

The sound of clinking dishes and shuffling in the kitchen stirred me out of my shock. I slowly walked over to the doorway. I heard the sizzling of bacon. I slowly peeked through the doorway, and there by the stove was... well... what was its name? The demon from before was

standing there and looked like an ordinary man. He looked human, almost *too* human, but I still recognized his. He looked up towards me.

“Oh, you’re finally awake! I’m making you some breakfast! Why not just take a seat at the table and I’ll bring it to you, ok?” he said.

“Why are you still here?” I asked. He just smiled and didn’t say a word as he placed the breakfast he made in front of me. Bacon, eggs, and toast arranged to look like a smiley face on the plate. I let out a giggle.

I looked up to tell him it looked delicious, but he was nowhere in sight. I decided not to question it as I ate. The breakfast was absolutely *perfect*. The demon was a great chef! I still can’t believe this food was made by a demon. A *demon!* Isn’t he supposed to steal my soul or something, and not cook for me?

“Alright, everything is unpacked, and the boxes are in the recycling outside,” he said appearing suddenly in front of me. I just stared at him with wide eyes.

“Thank you, but I do have one question,” I said, my voice shaking a bit. “Are you here to take my soul?”

“Heavens no! Why would I do that?” he looked offended.

“I don’t know... I’m sorry it’s just that-”

“That demons typically steals souls. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I’m not going to do that. I used to be human myself. Amelia was my best friend in high school. I could never harm anyone in her

family, except the man she chose as a husband instead of me,” he said sitting down across from me.

“You two were friends in high school?” I asked in disbelief.

“Oh my god, yes. Amelia was so fun to be around, too bad I was too stupid back then,” he said with a smile.

“Well, why did you sell your soul?” I asked.

“It was a long time ago. I’d rather not say. I did become immortal because of it, which isn’t so bad,” he said with a distant look in his eyes. “But I’m here to stay. Think of me as a guardian angel of sorts. An unexpected one, but one nevertheless.”

“Oh, well thank you,” I said in disbelief. “What is your name by the way?”

“You can call me Jerry,” he said with a smirk before he vanished once again.

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Living in my grandma’s old house has become easier since Jerry has been there to help. I am still getting used to him coming and going as he pleases, but I’m sure he means well. I’ve been learning more and more about my grandma with him around. Turns out she was heavily into witchcraft, and I had no idea about it. Jerry has offered to teach me about all the potions and spells my grandma often used. I do wonder what happened to her soul after she died, but I haven’t dared to ask.