



The Bomb and The General

Once upon a time there was an atom.

And once upon a time there was a bad general who wore a uniform covered with gold braid.

The world is full of atoms. Everything is made up of atoms. Atoms are very tiny, and when they come together, they form molecules which then form all the things we know.

Mom is made of atoms. Milk is made of atoms. Women are made of atoms. Air is made of atoms. Fire is made of atoms. We are made of atoms.

When the atoms are in harmony everything works fine. Life is based on this harmony.

But when an atom is smashed, its parts strike other atoms, which then strike still more atoms, and so on...

A terrifying explosion takes place!

This is atomic death.

Well, our atom was sad because it had been put inside an atomic bomb.

Along with other atoms it was waiting for the day when the bomb would be dropped and they would all be smashed, destroying everything.

Now the fact is that the world is also full of generals who spend their lives piling up bombs.

And our general filled his attic with bombs "When I have lots and lots," he said, "I'll start a beautiful war!" And he laughed.

How can you help but become bad when you have all those bombs within reach?

The atoms shut up in the bombs were very unhappy. Thanks to them there was going to be a huge catastrophe:

Many children would die, many moms, many kittens, many calves, many birds – everybody.

Whole towns would be destroyed where before there had been little white houses with red roofs and green trees all around... nothing would be left but a horrible black pit.

And so the atoms decided to rebel against the general.

One night, without making a sound, they stole silently out of the bombs and hid in the cellar.

The next morning, the general came to the attic with some other gentlemen.

These gentlemen said: "We've spent a pile of money to make all these bombs. Are we going to leave them here to collect mold? What's a general like you for, anyway?"

"It's true," the general replied. "We really must start this war. Otherwise my career will never get anywhere."

And he declared war.

When the news spread that the atomic war was going to break out, people went crazy with fear: "Oh, if only we hadn't allowed generals to make bombs!" they said.

But it was too late. Everybody fled the cities. But where could they find refuge?

Meanwhile the general had loaded his bombs on an aeroplane and was dropping them one by one on all the cities.

But when the bombs fell (empty as they were) they didn't explode at all! And the people, happy at their narrow escape (they could hardly believe their luck!) used them for flowerpots.

So they discovered that life was more beautiful without bombs... and decided not to make any more wars.

The Moms were happy. So were the Dads. So was everybody.

And what about the general?

Now that there were no more wars, he was fired.

And to make use of his uniform with all the braid, he became a hotel doorman.

Since everyone now lived in peace, many tourists came to the hotel. Even former enemies. Even soldiers whom in the old days the general had ordered about.

When they entered and left the hotel the general opened the big glass door and made an awkward bow, saying, "Good day, Sir."

And they (who had recognised him) said to him with a grim look:

"The service in this hotel is dreadful. It's an outrage!"

And the general turned deep red and was silent.

Because now he was of no importance at all.