Under the Rug

Two weeks passed and it happened again.
UNDER THE RUG

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You should always listen to your grandma. It might save a life.
Grandmas say a lot of crazy things. Things like . . .

Look before you leap.
If the shoe fits, wear it.
Sit up straight.

So you never know what is really good advice and what is just crazy-talk.
But grandmas know a lot. You should listen to them.
I should have listened to my grandma.

It started on Wednesday, five Wednesdays ago. I know it was Wednesday because Wednesday is sweeping day. Every Wednesday we sweep the house.
Grandma and I. Grandma sweeps the kitchen. I sweep the living room.

At breakfast that morning, five Wednesdays ago, Grandma told me:

Hunger is the best sauce.
Let sleeping dogs lie.
That sweater and bow tie make you look like an old man.
I was sweeping and thinking that I like my sweater, I like my bow tie. Which is probably why I forgot the other thing Grandma always says:

*Never sweep a problem under the rug.*

I finished sweeping the living room. I put away the dustpan. I was just walking into the kitchen… when I saw the dust bunny under the couch.

I swept the dust bunny under the rug.

And I didn't give it another thought until the next Wednesday.

That morning Grandma said:

*Never say never.*

*Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.*

*What happened to that cake that was on the table?*

In the living room, I swept up a trail of cake crumbs that disappeared under the rug. I lifted up the rug. The trail led straight to a clump of hair and crumbs and dust and two glowing red eyes that looked very angry.

The dust bunny had grown into a Dust Tiger!

I dropped the rug.

I couldn’t tell Grandma, so I put the end table over the lump in the rug.

That worked sort of okay for about a week. Then the cat food started to disappear. Something got into the garbage under the sink.

I tiptoed into the living room. I peeked under the rug.

I saw a huge twisted knot of hair, dirt, liver-flavored Kibbles ‘n Bits pieces, coffee grounds, orange peels, two chicken bone horns…and those angry red eyes staring hungrily at me.

The Dust Tiger had grown into a Dust Devil!
I dropped the rug in a panic.
The lump I had swept under the rug heaved. The lump growled.
I knew I had to take the bull by the horns. I had to strike while the iron
was hot. I had to make hay while the sun was shining.
I dragged the bookcase over and dropped it on the bulge in the rug.
Something squeaked. Something groaned. Then it was quiet.
The bookcase leaned against the wall a bit crooked, but everything was
fine. Everything was fine.

I went back to sweeping every Wednesday.
Grandma went back to saying:

_All that glitters is not gold._
_Beware the calm before the storm._
_Those pants make you look fat._

A week passed. Nothing happened. I might have dropped a few eggshells,
a bag of stale cookies, and a turkey neck or two in a certain corner of the
living room to keep things calm. There were no more outbursts, no more
attacks.
Everything was fine.

Two weeks passed and it happened again.
That morning, Grandma said:

_Silence is golden._
_An empty barrel makes the most noise._
_Where did that cat disappear to?_
I followed a trail of cat hairs out of the kitchen.
I knew where this trail was leading, but I followed it anyway. I followed the trail into the living room. I followed the trail to the edge of the rug.
I slowly... carefully... lifted up one corner of the rug with the end of my broom. Nothing. A smudge of dirt, a single small tuft of red cat fur, a dusty copper penny.
Then it attacked.
A mad tangle of dust, dirt, fur, yellow hardened cake crumbs, moldy bones, eggshells, turkey necks, liver-flavored Kibbles ’n Bits, fingernail clippings, cat pieces, hair, fangs, and those two red eyes lunged for my leg.
The Dust Devil had turned into a Dust Demon!
I stopped the hungry monster’s charge with the bristles of my broom. I flattened the awful thing with the smack of a chair. It heaved. It snarled. I swept it back under the rug.
I should have listened to Grandma. It could have saved a life.
But the Dust Demon needed more. And there was only one thing to do.
I remembered something else Grandma said:

*Don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today.*

I figured it was the least I could do, listen to her one last time.
I called, “Grandma? Could you come into the living room?”