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Old Granny and the Bean Thief

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DeFelice, Cynthia. *Old Granny and the Bean Thief*. Illustrated by Smith, Cat Bowman. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. ISBN 0374356149. \$16.00. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Humorous stories;

Subject: Grandmothers--Juvenile fiction; Beans--Juvenile fiction; Robbers and outlaws--Juvenile fiction; Book--Review;

Feisty Old Granny lives alone, far out in the southwest desert. With no one to talk to, Old Granny is lonely, but finds comfort in her love for beans. She keeps a pot soaking in the sink, and another cooking in the oven, ready to eat whenever she feels like it. But late one night, a thief climbs quietly through the window of her cabin, eats the oven beans and all of the soaking beans, and steals away again, only to return on the next two nights to repeat his crime. Old Granny, "madder than a pussycat thrown into a pond," decides to go to town and report the thefts to the sheriff. On the way, she meets several talking plants and animals, and even a fresh talking "cow patty;" and all suggest she put them in her bag on the way home and "you'll be glad you did." Granny is skeptical, but takes them home. How her new friends help trap and rid her of the bean thief results in rollicking good fun for the reader.

In this clever, light-hearted version of an old folktale, DeFelice and Smith have produced a winner. Children will be highly entertained by Old Granny's triumph over the bean thief, with the able assistance of her unusual new friends. Uncomplicated illustrations, in the bright, cheerful colors of the American southwest, provide visual amusement as well as a sense of place. Old Granny's facial expressions and repeated phrases warmly invite giggles and reader or audience participation at home, in the school classroom, or at a library story hour. DeFelice's readers will quickly join Old Granny's circle of new friends!