

## THE GREAT INTERIOR DECORATION CRISIS - PART III

*What does Grabbiner plan to do with the socks?*



That was the question that was on my mind as I tried to go to sleep that night. I could not stop wondering about it. It went round and round in my mind and kept me awake.

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I could not get to sleep.

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I am sure that since reading my last blog post, you, my dear readers, may have wondered why Grabbiner had asked me to gather some holey old socks. Well, I shall take up the story of the Great Interior Decoration Crisis, and you will find out how the socks were used. Before I go on, I will say just one thing by way of warning: don't try this at home!

I had already assembled a huge pile of unwanted socks by the time Grabbiner arrived at Kimster's box to start work.

"Well done, Harrison," said Grabbiner, as soon as he saw the socks. "Nice and holey: those socks will be just the ticket for this job! Now let's open up these paint cans and get started!"

"But Grabbiner, shouldn't we move Kimster's furniture out of the way first?" I asked, grabbing hold of one end of Kimster's bookshelf and looking expectantly at Grabbiner.



Grabbiner started laughing. "Oh, Harrison, you really do not know anything at all about interior design!" he managed to say between chortles. "Do you just want to paint the walls, or do you want everything in this room to match perfectly? We need to leave the furniture exactly where it is. Now, put down that bookshelf at once, and stop wasting time! We have work to do!"

With that, Grabbiner began opening the paint cans. He opened all of them. "Harrison, we've got some wonderful colours - come over here and see!" he shrieked excitedly.







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I peered into the paint cans. There was purple (really bright purple). There was brown (mud brown, not chocolate brown). There were two shades of green (bright light green and dark moss green). There was a murky colour that was halfway between green and brown. There was bright yellow and there was bright red. I thought that those two were so bright that they might stop traffic.

Sometimes when you are about to make a mistake in life, you get a feeling that you might be about to make a mistake. What I mean to say, dear readers, is that there are some mistakes in life that you can stop yourself from making *before* you actually make them. All you have to do is pay attention to that feeling. I am ashamed to say that the Great Interior Decoration Crisis was one of those mistakes. I could have stopped it from happening. The whole matter of the socks had been bothering me. Then Grabbiner told me not to move Kimster's furniture out of the way, and that also bothered me. By the time I saw the paint colours, I really did have a feeling that I was about to make a mistake. I just did not pay attention to the feeling. Instead, I paid attention to Grabbiner Gerbil III.

Well, it was pretty much impossible not to pay attention to Grabbiner. You see, whilst I was peering into the red paint can, I felt something wet land on the top of my head with a splat. I straightened up and felt it trickle down my back. I reached up to touch the spot where it had landed. It felt wet and sticky.



I looked at my hand. It was purple. I had been hit by some flying purple paint. That was when I turned round to look for Grabbiner.

As I looked round the room, there were splashes of purple paint on every possible surface. In the middle of it all, there was Grabbiner, grinning from ear to ear, standing atop Kimster's coffee table in a puddle of purple paint, brandishing a paint-filled sock around his head. As I watched, paint spurted in all directions from the holes in the foot of the sock, landing on Kimster's rug, on her tiled floor, on her sofa, on her bookshelf, even on her African violet, which was still sitting on the coffee table. "Grabbiner!" I called out, as I dodged out of the way of a giant blob of purple paint that was heading towards me.





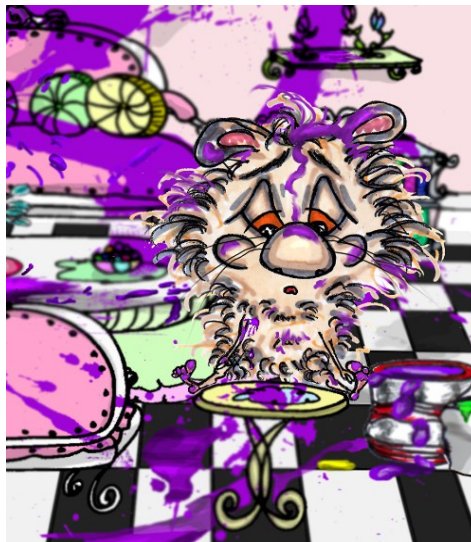
"Grabbiner!" I shouted again, as the blob of paint I had avoided landed with a splat on the wall behind where I had been standing. "GRABBINER!" I yelled at the top of my voice.

Finally Grabbiner seemed to hear me and stopped twirling the sock around above his head. "Isn't it fantastic, Harrison?" he asked, not pausing to allow me to reply. "This job is going better than any job I have ever done before. Just look at that fantastic colour! Now could you fill another sock for me, please? What do you think? Bright yellow paint?"

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Yes, I do think bright yellow paint would be perfect!"

"Now, just wait a minute, Grabbiner!" I exclaimed. "I wanted to make this room look beautiful. I thought I had hired a hard-working professional to help me do just that. Instead, you've just marched in here and thrown splotches of purple paint around. You've ruined Kimster's rug, her tiled floor, her sofa, her bookshelf and her coffee table. I don't know how I'll ever be able to put this right. And just look at her African violet!" I slumped down on the floor, dejected.



I was really angry with Grabbiner, but I was also really disappointed in myself. How could I have allowed this to happen to Kimster's sitting room? How would I ever put it right?

"Harrison, my dear fellow, you look just as you did when I found you slumped down in the paint aisle in the DIY store. What could possibly be making you feel so dejected now?"



"Well, Grabbiner," I said in a sullen tone, "just look around."

"But this job is going magnificently well, Harrison," said Grabbiner, smiling confidently at me. "Just you wait: this room - this whole box, in fact - is going to look amazing. As we professional interior designers know, rooms that are being decorated always look worse before they look better. In fact, it is usually the case that the worse a room looks whilst you are in the process of decorating it, the better it will look once you have finished. Of course, not being a professional interior designer yourself, you could not know that. Luckily for you, you hired me. Now, Harrison, please don't feel bad about getting angry. I forgive you." Grabbiner held his hand out to me, hauled me to my feet and gave me a hearty slap on the back. Then he looked me right in the eyes and said, "Trust me, Harrison. Just trust me."





Dear readers, I felt terrible. Grabbiner was a professional, and instead of thanking him for all his hard work, I had shouted at him. I was ashamed of myself. Just as I was thinking about how lucky I was that Grabbiner had found it in his heart to forgive me, I heard a loud knock at the door. "That'll be my team!" said Grabbiner, running towards the door.

He marched back with six other gerbils. He said, "Harrison Hamster I, may I present the best decorating team in the whole wide world: *my* decorating team. Meet Gillian, Gertrude, George, Gracie, Grayson and Gary. Now we will really be able to get moving on this job!"



Before I could even count to ten, Gillian, Gertrude, George, Gracie, Grayson and Gary had all grabbed socks, filled them with paint and scampered off. Grabbiner had climbed back on top of Kimster's coffee table. I filled a sock with yellow paint and handed it to him. Then I asked, "Grabbiner, is there any way I could help?"

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"Harrison, that would be great! You and I can decorate the sitting room together whilst my team takes care of the rest of the box. We're going to have great fun!"

Soon enough I was on top of the coffee table with Grabbiner, both of us twirling paint-filled socks around our heads. Gradually I began to feel better. By the time we moved on to the red paint, I was even smiling. When we started on the brown, I realised I was having a good time.







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I was having such a good time that I chose to work alongside Grabbiner and his team of gerbils every day. At the end of each day, I walked around Kimster's box and wondered if we had really made any progress. Each day I thought that the box looked worse than it had the day before. Each day I reminded myself of what Grabbiner had told me: that rooms that are being decorated always look worse before they look better. Each day I reminded myself that I had to trust Grabbiner. Each day I reminded myself that Grabbiner was a professional. Each day I reminded myself how little I really knew about interior design. That continued until the day before Kimster was due to return.

I was with Grabbiner on the roof of Kimster's box when I heard it.

*Toot, toot!*

Both Grabbiner and I jumped at the sudden loud noise. I looked down from the roof to see a little pink car with a big splotch of yellow paint on its roof.

*Toot, toot, toot, toot!*

I scrambled towards the edge of the roof and looked down. There stood Kimster, shaking her head and staring at her box. Her mouth was open, as if she was trying to say something but couldn't get the words out.



"Kimster!" I called out excitedly, leaning over the edge of the roof to look at her. "You can drive!"

Kimster did not move from where she stood. She did not call out back to me. She seemed to be rooted to the spot, her mouth still wide open.

Grabbiner whispered something to me, but I didn't hear what he'd said. I was too worried about Kimster to pay attention to him. Then Grabbiner called out to Kimster, "Isn't it magnificent?" He waved his arms about.

"Who are you?" asked Kimster. I was pleased to see that Kimster was able to speak, even though she did not sound like her usual cheerful self.

"Allow me to introduce myself. I am your interior designer, Grabbiner Gerbil III," Grabbiner said in a very professional tone.





"Interior designer? I don't have an interior designer," Kimster shouted angrily, her hands on her hips.

"But you do," replied Grabbiner. "You have me, thanks to your friend Harrison."

"Harrison Hamster I," shouted Kimster, pointing at me, "get down from that roof this instant!" Then she pointed at the patch of ground next to her.

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"Oooh!" said Grabbiner. "She wants to see the inside - it's so exciting!"

"Um, Grabbiner, I don't think she likes it."

"Oh, don't be silly, Harrison. She loves it. She was just a bit surprised when she first saw it. That happens to a lot of my clients. Now she just has to get used to how fabulous it looks." Grabbiner gave me a hearty slap on the back. The slap was so hearty that I fell forward, hurtling off the edge of the roof towards the ground.

I landed head first in a pot of purple paint that Gracie had been using on the front wall of Kimster's box.





That was lucky for me in two ways. Firstly, it was a deep paint can that was almost full, so I didn't hurt myself (although I did get covered in paint). Secondly, as I wiggled out of the paint can and sat down on the grass, I thought I saw the corners of Kimster's mouth start to turn up into a smile (although she quickly started glaring at me and looking cross again).



I stood opposite Kimster, looking at the ground. I did not dare to look at Kimster. I could not bear to see her so angry with me. I followed her into her box, still hanging my head in shame. Kimster walked around each room, still not saying anything. I followed her, afraid to say anything.





After she had walked through the whole box, Kimster headed back outside. I shuffled along behind her, back towards the spot where she had parked her car. Then she turned towards me, her hands on her hips. She said, "Harrison, I am going to stay with my sister Frankie for a month. I think that should be long enough for you to sort this out." With that, Kimster got into her car and drove away.



Kimster was about right when she said it would take a month. It took three weeks, five days, seven hours and thirteen minutes to sort it out. It was a lot of hard work, but this is how Kimster's sitting room looked after I had finished.



As I said, it was a lot of hard work. Actually, it was very hard work. To be completely and utterly honest, it was very, very hard work. And I did it all on my own. The last thing I wanted was any advice from Grabbiner Gerbil III. After all, that was what had got me into this mess in the first place.

When she came back from Frankie's and saw her box, Kimster was speechless. She was speechless in a good way.



I could tell because she was smiling a proper smile that made her eyes light up. When she finally spoke, she said, "Harrison, you did it! And it looks so beautiful. And the sitting room! It looks so fresh and different! Just the makeover it needed!"

Dear readers, I did not tell her. You know what I am talking about. Oh, come on! You must have been thinking it as soon as you saw the picture of the sitting room. I had repainted the sitting room in rose pink, exactly the same colour it had been before Kimster went on her driving course. Instead, I turned to Kimster, a twinkle in my eye, and said, "Would you





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like to take me for a drive?"

Now here is the part you have all been waiting for: the moral of the story. Well, I said before that I have come to believe that sometimes the worst kind of crisis situation can arise when you try to do something nice for someone else. But what sort of hamster would I be if that was the moral of this story? It is true that the Great Interior Decoration Crisis did come about because I had wanted to do something nice for Kimster, but the world would be a terrible place if, for fear of a crisis, no one ever did anything nice for anyone else. Anyway, being the sort of hamster that I am, fear of a crisis has never put me off trying to do something nice for someone else.

I have been thinking about it a lot, and I have reached a conclusion: I was wrong. The worst kind of crisis situation does *not* arise when you try to do something nice for someone else. Rather, the worst kind of crisis situation arises when you try to do something nice for someone else *but you don't think about what that person would really want*. That is to say, if I had given any thought at all to what Kimster would have wanted, I would have known that she would have wanted her sitting room to be pink. Well, of course I would have known. Kimster's favourite colour has always been pink. Aargh! I was right about one thing. It *was* all my own fault, and I *did* only have myself to blame.

There is just one thing I must add to all this, dear readers, and that is a little bonus moral for those of you who, like me, want to learn from my mistakes. The bonus moral is this: it is not a good idea to redecorate your home or anyone else's using paint from the clearance aisle and holey

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socks, even if a professional interior designer advises you to do so (even if that professional interior designer has very impressive-looking business cards). Let this picture be your warning.



Thank you, dear readers, for staying tuned. It was worth it, wasn't it? I'll see you soon with a new blog post.

Bye for now!

Harrison Hamster I  
17th July 2013