Dedicated to all the parents working valiantly to nurture their children, to do their jobs, on the front line or from home, and to protect us all from the coronavirus by teaching and using social distancing.

Stay strong; stay safe!

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A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the World Health Organization Global Covid 19 Fund.
“Listen my children, and you shall hear...” Why you’re stuck home from school at this time of the year.

This gabby old Grammy’s about to explain ‘Cause she’s sure that you’re wondering, up there in your brain:

“What’s all this about? Why can’t I see my friends? How long will it be ‘til this crazy mess ends? And why’s everyone saying this thing’s so contagious? What does that even mean? It’s all just outrageous!”
Well, slow down, my dears; you’re entitled to know. Let old Grammy tell you how this came to be so.

It all started out when some people got sick from a new kind of germ that had learned a slick trick.

You see, usually these germs live in critters like bats. But a few somehow figured out how to change that. They managed to find out how to make us their home; How to jump from a bat to, say... cousin Jerome.
Now I know it sounds yucky,
but it’s nonetheless true:
There are lots of germs living inside me and you.
These aren’t the kind of bugs you can see
They’re too small for that,
they’d fit on a flea’s knee!

And most of the time they aren’t very rude.
They keep to themselves and help us digest food.
But this new bug is different, and I’ll tell you why.
It can wait a long time until someone walks by,
   And when we brush a hand on a shelf where it’s hiding,
   It can jump on that hand like a taxi it’s riding.

And if we shake hands then with somebody new,
   The bug jumps to their hand, and they have it too!
   This bug loves to jump from one to the other
   It could jump from your uncle onto your grandmother!
So that’s what we mean by “contagious,” my pumpkin. That this bug is great at both waiting and jumpin’!
And also, it has the unfortunate habit
Of making us sick when we happen to grab it.
But here’s the good news:
   it can’t jump too far out!

Just six of your steps from where it starts out!

So if you’re out walking, or shopping, or playing,
Just make sure that those six steps away you are staying
From other folks out for the very same reason,
And we’ll all make it through this bug-bothered season.
There are a few other things, dears, that you need to know: How it gets inside us so that it can grow. The way that is does this is mostly our hands, Which are the first place that it usually lands.

And if we scratch an itch on our eye or our nose, It can jump from our hand into one of those, Creep inside us and use some parts of our body To make more covid bugs, so that they can all party!

So one way to stay safe from a covid convention Is to keep hands away from our face, as prevention.
Another thing you can do to keep us all mellow
Is to cough, sneeze or sniffle right into your elbow.
That keeps bugs from flying
   out into the air,
Hitting other folks’ faces,
   starting new parties there.

And it could be
   the very best
   thing you can do
   Is to wash your hands often,
      with soap, through and through,
And sing ‘Happy Birthday’ two times while you scrub down.
   Fronts and backs, fingers, thumbs
       all should get a good rub down!
Wash up whenever you come in from outdoors,
Before you start eating, after crawling on floors,
After you use the potty
(you know that already),

Because soap makes the covid bugs
limp as spaghetti!

It makes them weak
and tired, so they can’t jump or grow,

Which keeps us all safe,
from you to Great Aunt Jo!

So that’s what it takes, dears, to keep us alright!
And YOU can be a big help in this fight.
There’s just one more thing Grammy still needs to tell you:

It’s so hard not to feel something unfair befell you.
Grammy knows it’s not fun to be stuck here at home,
Missing friends, missing school, cramped inside and alone,
Not touching our faces, always washing our hands,
It’s all hard and it’s boring! Everyone understands.

We all wish it were over,
but until this thing ends
We all need to get by
with the help of our friends,
And our family, and neighbors,
and all those we find
Who are looking for ways
to be helpful and kind.
We can call on the phone, or a tablet computer
Send a video of our skills on a bike or a scooter.

We can talk
and tell stories,
draw pictures,
sing songs,
Tell jokes,
play new games.

And if this prolongs
We can think about
all that we’re
thankful for,
Like a warm place to live
and the time
now in store

To do things
we never had
time for before.
To look at old photos and learn who they’re of
   And how they’re related to people we love,
To reach out to folks we’ve not seen in a while,
To imagine, to dream, think of what makes us smile.
   And sometime, I’m sure,
   before too very long,
Things will get better;
   but if I’m not wrong...

We might someday look back
   on these strange, empty days
With a sad little sigh, alongside
songs of praise,
When we think back on how, across all the world’s lands,
We stayed distant together, with time on our hands.
About the Author

Rhea Paul is Professor and Chair of Department of Communication Disorders at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT, a former teacher and speech-language pathologist. With colleague Donia Fahim, she hosts the podcast “Let’s Talk About Super Special Kids And Cake” on iTunes and Spotify for parents of children with disabilities.

As a mother and grandmother, she has some idea how hard it is to keep young kids cooped up at home and hopes this book can provide a few minutes of quiet togetherness for their families.

About the Illustrator

Emily Wist is a professional artist and fabricator with an MFA in Sculpture from Boston University. She lives and works in Chicago, Illinois where she participates in local artistic and makerspace communities.

To see more of her work, including the #onehourflowers project, follow her on Instagram at @wistworks.

Emily hopes that this book will be a source of calm, comfort, and maybe even inspiration for both children and grown-ups in these changing times.