

The Love Powder

by O. Henry

The Blue Light Drug Store is downtown between the Bowery and First Avenue. The Blue Light is a very *serious* drug store. It does not sell candy or chewing gum or soda. It deals in medicines and prescriptions.

Micky Schack was the night clerk of the Blue Light and the friend of many of his customers. At the Blue Light one seeks more than mere medicine. There one asks aid and advice and assistance. And Micky's words of wisdom were warmly welcomed.

Micky lived and ate dinners at Mrs. Riddle's boardinghouse two blocks away. Mrs. Riddle had a daughter named Rosy and—as you must have guessed—Micky **adored** her. To him she was the sun and the moon—and all the stars in the heavens.

But Micky was timid, and his hopes remained frozen in fear. Behind his counter he was confident and calm, the master of his trade. Away from the store he was weak-kneed and hesitant. Faint-hearted and shy, he lacked the courage to tell Rosy.

To add to his problem there was Chunk McGowan. Chunk also roomed at the Riddle's and was crazy about Rosy. At the same time he was Micky's friend and customer and often dropped in at the Blue Light to have a cut or bruise treated after a playful sidewalk scuffle.

One afternoon McGowan drifted in in his easy way, and sat, good-natured, upon a stool.

"Micky," he said to his friend behind the counter, "there's an item I need—if you can make it for me."

Micky stared at Chunk's face, searching hard for the signs of the usual wounds. "Where's the injury?" he asked.

Mr. McGowan smiled. "The trouble," he said, "has to do with my *heart*. Say Micky—Rosy and me are going to run away and get married tonight."

Micky's eyes opened wide.

"That is," continued Chunk, the smile fading from his face, "if she doesn't change her mind before the time comes. We've been making plans for the great event for the past two weeks. One day she says she will. The same evening she says no. We've agreed on tonight. And Rosy's stuck to that for two days in a row. But there are still five hours to go—and I'm afraid that she'll back out at the very last minute."

"You said there was an item you needed from me," remarked Micky slowly.

Mr. McGowan looked ill at ease, a condition quite unusual for him.

"I wouldn't have this foul up for anything in the world," he went on. "I've rented a little apartment uptown, with flowers on the table and a kettle ready to boil. And I've hired a preacher to marry us at his house at 9:30 sharp. Our plan's got to work! And it will!—if Rosy doesn't change her mind again." Mr. McGowan shook his head sadly, troubled by his doubts.

"I still don't see yet," said Micky shortly, "what it is that you want of me, or what I can be doing about that."

"Old man Riddle don't like me at all," McGowan continued. "For a week now he hasn't let Rosy step outside the door with me. If they could afford to lose a boarder, they'd have bounced me out a long time ago. I think the world of her, and she'll never regret flyin' the coop with Chunk McGowan."

"You will excuse me, Chunk," said Micky. "I must make up something that is to be picked up soon."

"Say," said McGowan, looking up suddenly. "Say, Micky, isn't there some kind of powder—a love powder, you know, that'll make a girl like you better if you give it to her?"

Micky's lip curled with scorn at this foolish idea. But before he could answer, Chunk went on. "Yes, a love powder, Micky, that's what I need."

Strong and simple was Chunk McGowan. A better judge of men than

Micky would have seen that Chunk's tough frame was strung on delicate wires. Like a good general in foreign territory, he was trying to guard every path against possible failure.

"I thought," went on Chunk, hopefully, "that if I had one of them love powders to give Rosy when I see her at supper tonight, it might brace her up a bit. You know, keep her from backing out on our plan to skip. I guess she doesn't need a team of mules to drag her away. But I'd like to make sure. If the stuff works for a couple of hours, it'll do the trick."

"When is this foolishness of running away supposed to happen?" asked Micky.

"Nine o'clock," said Mr. McGowan. "Supper's at seven. At eight Rosy says she has a bad headache and goes to bed. At nine I slip into Riddle's backyard through the space where there's a board off his fence. I go under Rosy's window and help her down the fire escape. It's got to go off like clockwork so we can get to the preacher on time. It's all dead easy if Rosy doesn't back out. Can you fix me one of them love powders, Micky?"

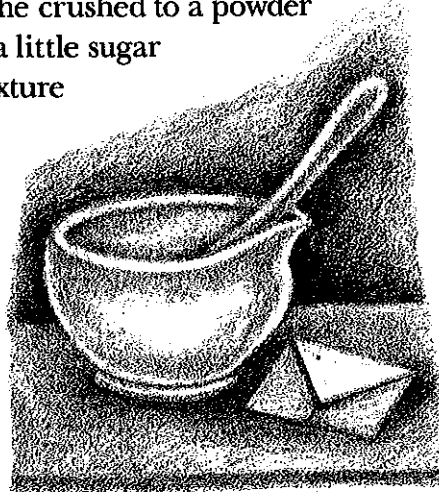
Micky shook his head thoughtfully.

"Chunk," said he, "it is with drugs of that nature that a druggist must take the greatest of care. To you alone of all my acquaintances would I trust a powder such as the one you ask. But for you I shall make it, and you shall see the power it has."

Micky went behind the counter. There he crushed to a powder a tiny tablet of morphine. To that he added a little sugar to increase the bulk. Then he folded the mixture neatly in a white paper. Taken by an adult, this powder would produce several hours of deep sleep without danger to the sleeper.

This he handed to Chunk McGowan, telling him to use it in a liquid if possible. McGowan offered his hearty thanks and departed with his treasure.

How very clever was Micky's plan. For no sooner had Chunk left than the druggist reached for the telephone.



He quickly informed Mr. Riddle of Chunk's plan for eloping with Rosy. Mr. Riddle was a man with a very quick temper.

"Much obliged," he said briefly to Micky. "We'll just see about Chunk McGowan! My room's right above Rosy's. I'll go up there after supper and load the shotgun and wait. If he comes in my backyard, he'll go away looking for a doctor instead of a preacher."

With Rosy deep in sleep and her angry parent waiting and armed, Micky felt sure that Chunk McGowan soon would be out of the picture.

All night in the Blue Light Drug Store, Micky waited for some news of the disaster. But no news came.

At eight o'clock in the morning the day clerk arrived, and Micky started hurriedly for Mrs. Riddle's to learn the outcome. Just as he stepped out of the store, who but Chunk McGowan sprang across the street and grasped his hand—Chunk McGowan with a smile of victory and bursting with joy.

"Went off without a hitch!" said Chunk with an enormous grin. "Rosy hit the fire escape on time to the second, and we made it to the preacher's at 9:30 on the nose. She's up at the apartment now. We had eggs this morning. How lucky I am! You must drop by some day and have dinner with us, Micky. I've got a job down near the bridge, and that's where I'm heading for now."

"The—the—love powder?" stammered Micky.

"Oh, that stuff you gave me," said Chunk, his grin growing even wider. "Well, it was this way. I sat down at the supper table last night at Riddle's. And I looked at Rosy and I said to myself, 'Chunk, if you're going to marry Rosy, do it fair and square. Don't try any nonsense with a gem like her.' So I kept the powder you gave me in my pocket. And then my eyes fell on another person present, someone who could show a little more affection to his future son-in-law. So I watched for my chance and dumped that love powder in old man Riddle's coffee—see?"

SELECTING DETAILS FROM THE STORY. Each of the following sentences helps you understand the story. Complete each sentence below by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer.

1. Chunk was afraid that Rosy might
 - a. tell her father about their plan.
 - b. fall in love with Micky.
 - c. change her mind about running away.
2. Chunk hoped that Micky could make him
 - a. a sleeping pill.
 - b. a love powder.
 - c. some medicine.
3. Micky called Mr. Riddle in order to
 - a. tell him about Chunk's plan.
 - b. get his permission to go out with Rosy.
 - c. ask to speak to Rosy.
4. At the end of the story Chunk told Micky that
 - a. Rosy decided not to get married after all.
 - b. Mr. Riddle had been waiting with his shotgun.
 - c. the plan worked perfectly.

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

HANDLING STORY ELEMENTS. Each of the following questions reviews your understanding of story elements. Put an *x* in the box next to the correct answer to each question.

1. What happened last in the *plot* of the story?
 - a. Chunk said that he put the love powder in Mr. Riddle's coffee.
 - b. Micky made a telephone call to Mr. Riddle.
 - c. Chunk told Micky that he planned to marry Rosy.
2. Which sentence best *characterizes* Micky?
 - a. He was confident and bold at all times.
 - b. When he was away from his store, he was timid and shy.
 - c. His customers did not like him or respect him.
3. "The Love Powder" is *set* in
 - a. a drugstore.
 - b. a backyard.
 - c. an apartment uptown.
4. Which sentence best tells the *theme* of the story?
 - a. It is wise to be honest with the person you love.
 - b. It is not really possible to make a love powder.
 - c. A druggist tries to ruin a friend's plan, but he ends up helping him.

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

OBSERVING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS. Answer the following vocabulary questions by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. If you wish, look back at the words before you answer the questions.

- Micky adored Rosy: to him she was the sun and the moon, and all the stars in the heavens. The word *adored* means
 - a. avoided.
 - b. was jealous of.
 - c. loved greatly.
- Chunk McGowan took the love powder, offered his thanks, and departed with his treasure. The word *departed* means
 - a. went away.
 - b. stared at.
 - c. forgot.
- Although Micky had many customers, Chunk was the only one of his acquaintances he would trust with a love powder. What are *acquaintances*?
 - a. people one knows casually
 - b. people one never sees
 - c. people one doesn't like
- Micky told Mr. Riddle about Chunk's plan for eloping with Rosy. The word *eloping* means
 - a. borrowing money from.
 - b. running away to get married.
 - c. telling lies to.

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

COMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE. Complete the following paragraph by filling in each blank with one of the words listed in the box below. Each of the words appears in the story. Since there are five words and four blanks, one word in the group will not be used.

How much sleep a person _____ really depends upon that person. Studies show that most adults _____ seven to eight hours a night. However, some people can get along quite well with just a _____ of hours of sleep, while other people must sleep ten to twelve hours a night. It is not _____ to say exactly how much sleep a person should have.

couple possible

sleep

apartment needs

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

KNOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY. Each of the following questions will help you to think critically about the selection. Put an x in the box next to the correct answer.

1. Why didn't Mr. Riddle chase Chunk away at nine o'clock that evening?
 a. He changed his mind about Chunk.
 b. He forgot all about Chunk's plan.
 c. He was sound asleep.

2. Chunk put the powder in Mr. Riddle's coffee because he
 a. wanted Mr. Riddle to like him better.
 b. didn't have a chance to put it in Rosy's drink.
 c. knew that it would put Mr. Riddle to sleep.

3. Chunk told Micky that he had trouble that had "to do with my heart." By this Chunk meant that he
 a. had been ill for years with a heart disease.
 b. had a problem that had to do with love.
 c. needed to see a doctor at once.

4. At the end of the story, Micky probably felt
 a. pleased.
 b. shocked.
 c. amused.

$\times 5 =$
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

Questions for Writing and Discussion

- After he called Mr. Riddle, Micky waited all night for "news of the disaster." What did Micky expect to hear when he arrived at Mrs. Riddle's boardinghouse? Describe that scene as vividly as possible.
- The author states that "Chunk's tough frame was strung on delicate wires." What does that mean?
- Micky asked Chunk, "When is this foolishness of running away supposed to happen?" Should that remark have made Chunk suspicious? Give reasons for your answer.

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises. Then write your score on pages 150 and 151.

SELECTING DETAILS FROM THE STORY
+
 HANDLING STORY ELEMENTS
+
 OBSERVING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS
+
 COMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE
+
 KNOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY
▼
 Score Total: Story 2

Cupid

Article Free Pass

Cupid, ancient Roman god of love in all its varieties, the counterpart of the Greek god Eros and the equivalent of Amor in Latin poetry.

According to myth, Cupid was the son of Mercury, the winged messenger of the gods, and Venus, the goddess of love. He often appeared as a winged infant carrying a bow and a quiver of arrows whose wounds inspired love or passion in his every victim. He was sometimes portrayed wearing armor like that of Mars, the god of war, perhaps to suggest ironic parallels between warfare and romance or to symbolize the invincibility of love.

Although some literature portrayed Cupid as callous and careless, he was generally viewed as beneficent, on account of the happiness he imparted to couples both mortal and immortal. At the worst he was considered mischievous in his matchmaking, this mischief often directed by his mother, Venus. In one tale, her machinations backfired when she used Cupid in revenge on the mortal

Psyche, only to have Cupid fall in love and succeed in making Psyche his immortal wife.

Myths and Legends - Apuleius

Tale of Cupid and Psyche

By Bingley

http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/grecoromanmyth1/a/mythslegends_4.htm

Once upon a time there was a king with three daughters. They were all beautiful, but by far the most beautiful was the youngest, Psyche. She was so beautiful that people began to neglect the worship of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty. Venus was very jealous, and asked her son Cupid (the boy with the arrows) to make Psyche fall in love with a horrible monster. When he saw how beautiful she was, Cupid dropped the arrow meant for her and pricked himself, and fell in love with her.

Despite her great beauty no-one wanted to marry Psyche. Her parents consulted an oracle, and were told that she was destined to marry a monster, and they were to take her to the top of a mountain and leave her there. The west wind took her and wafted her away to a palace, where she was waited on by invisible servants. When night came her new husband visited her, and told her that he would always visit her by night and she must never try to see him.

Although her invisible husband was kind and gentle with her, and the invisible servants attended to her every desire, Psyche grew homesick. She persuaded her husband to allow her sisters to visit her. When they saw how she lived they became very jealous and talked Psyche into peeking at her husband, saying that he was a monster who was fattening her up to be eaten and that her only chance of safety was to kill him. Psyche took a lamp and a knife, but when she saw her beautiful husband, Cupid, she was so surprised she dripped some hot wax onto his shoulder, waking him. He took in the situation at a glance and immediately left Psyche and the magnificent palace she had been living in disappeared in a puff of smoke.

Psyche roamed about looking for her husband, and eventually in desperation approached his mother, Venus. Still angry, the goddess set various tasks for Psyche, all of which she passed, with a bit of help from ants and river gods. At last Cupid found out what was going on, and he persuaded Jupiter to order Venus to stop her persecution of Psyche. Then they were married and lived happily ever after - and it really was ever after since Psyche was made a goddess.

The similarity to modern day fairy stories such as Beauty and the Beast or Cinderella is obvious.