

REMOTELY RELATED

By Alan Haehnel

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CAST: one male or female

I curse the moment my grandfather discovered the remote. **(HE or SHE begins to jerk through different scenarios to indicate changing channels on the TV. Accents, vocal changes and varied poses should be used to accentuate the switches.)** This little beauty is one of the most venomous snakes in all of Tanzania. One bite and you'll be writhing in agony for hours. Whoops! She's getting ready to strike! **(Switch, singing)** The hills are alive with the sound of music! **(Switch)** We're looking at a major cold front that might, if it collides with this high pressure from Canada, drop some significant precipitation in our area tonight and tomorrow. **(Switch)** Don't move! Get your hands up against the wall! Spread 'em! Stay where you are! So help me, I'll shoot! **(Switch)** Now, you're never going to believe the secret ingredient I put in with the scallops to give it that tiniest bit of zing that people love. I learned this from my Sicilian grandmother, believe it or not. Lovely woman. **(Switch)** Aaaaah! I won! I won! I can't believe this! I won the million dollars! Oh, thank-you, thank-you! I won! **(Switch)** The submersible will attempt to dive to depths beyond which any vessel has ever descended. The pressure exerted by the ocean will be immense and potentially disastrous if any part of the mission should fail. **(Switch)** Diarrhea used to keep me at home until I found gentle, delicious No-Flo, in tablets or liquid. Because really, who wants to be tied to the toilet? **(Switch)** Okay, we're going for the burn big-time with this next series. Don't give up! Go with me, now—drop down to the lower intensity if you have to, but don't quit! And one, two, three, four....**(Switch back to normal voice)** No more than ten seconds per channel, I swear. And I had to live with it for a week! Believe me, it got to me in very strange ways.

The funny thing is, my grandparents don't own a television with a remote control. No, at their house they have this ancient TV that looks like it was invented before the light bulb—one of those models built into this massive wooden piece of furniture that takes eighteen men and a horse to move. The picture barely comes in; half the time it's either rolling up and down or side to side; you can't even hook it to cable, it's so old. On a clear night, if the Big Dipper is aligned properly and one rabbit ear is pointing exactly due north and the other is 18 degrees west of being aligned with Albuquerque, you can get two channels semi-clearly. Otherwise, forget it. And you have to get up out of your chair every time you want to adjust the things, which is all the time.

Everybody in the family has told my grandparents to get a new TV, but Grampie has always said, **(in Grampie's voice, very loudly)** "The day I get so lazy I can't get out of my chair to change a channel is the day you might as well lay me in the grave. There's nothing wrong with this television. You can take your remote control widgets and throw them out the window!" He always yells like that because he's practically deaf.

The trouble began when my grandparents came over to be with me while my parents went on a week-long vacation to Hawaii. Now, I'm not bitter about them going to Hawaii—they deserved a vacation after all these years. I can understand that, on a tight budget, they really couldn't afford to bring me along this time. I have no problem with that. I didn't even have trouble with Grammy and Grampie coming to stay with me at our house for a week. We get along okay, though I usually end up with a sore throat from yelling so much to be heard. **(yelling)** "Do we have any cereal, Grammy?"

(As Grammy, yelling back) "Whose burial? Who died *now*?"

I kind of figured I would have the television to myself, too, which was going to be nice. Given how attached my grandparents seemed to be to that ancient thing they had at their house, I didn't think they would want to have much to do with our cable-attached, remote-controlled, new-fangled machine. About that particular fact, I was tragically mistaken.

I don't think Grampie had time to do much more than go to the bathroom before he had staked claim to his territory for the week: our living room, the big recliner, right in front of the television, remote control glued to his hand. The volume? On maximum, of course. I believe that our television could be heard over an area of 27 square miles.

He slept with the thing. I am not exaggerating. I was trying to get some rest so I could be at least semi-intelligent during school, and all I could hear was the television flicking from station to station. Grampie has fallen asleep in the chair with his finger pressing the channel changer. Grammy didn't notice; she, with her blissful deafness, had gone to bed hours before. I clamped the pillow to my head. No good. I turned on my stereo, but in order to get it loud enough to drown out the t.v., the decibel level had to equal someone running a jackhammer two feet from my head. Whatever I did, I couldn't avoid the awful switching **(As SHE did earlier, SHE switches from channel to channel, only much faster):**

Supplies are limited! **(switch)** Winds from the south...**(switch)** My love for you...**(switch)** The ferocious rhino...**(switch)** Yabba-dabba-do!**(switch)** Soothing the itch...**(switch)** Comment *allez-vous*...**(switch)** How far away were you? **(switch)** Stretch the hamstrings...**(switch)** Civil War for five hundred...**(switch, singing)** Dude looks like a ...**(switch)** To be or not to be....

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