



Cold Sweat: (The Strange Misadventures of Grandpa Chas, Professor Clem, and Others)

Peter Linzmeyer

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With its G-rated content, Cold Sweat would be a fun book to pick up when it's time for a laugh.

Peter Linzmeyer's *Cold Sweat* is a light, fun read, offering humorous anecdotes and poems, all highlighted by cartoon illustrations by Tom Linzmeyer, the author's brother.

Three main characters from an Appalachian mountain community are featured: young Chas, Chas as a grandfather, and Professor Clem Hupfenstock, "Adjunct Professor of Business Ethics and Responsibility." The three are hapless. Chas is monitored by his mother, father, and older sister Betty; the older Chas and Clem have wives to act as directors and critics. Each are static figures, players in the anecdotes, with every episode unrelated to the other, albeit ending almost identically—a conclusion along the lines of "Two seconds after this frightful event, Chas awoke in a ... COLD SWEAT!"

The episodes are routine events in daily life, twisted and tweaked for humorous effect. Young Chas is in the hot seat for a wacky episode involving the family's treasured Black Forest cuckoo clock, or Grandpa Chas must endure his wife's disapproval because he's purchased the wrong type of Christmas tree. These events are written in the manner of the wry commentary of Dave Barry but slightly miss the mark of belly laughs, instead prompting smiles of recognition. There are also some Steven Wright-style surrealistic observations, as when there are worries over a house milk bottle receptacle that "had a metal door which the milk-man opened to place the milk bottles in, then closed so the milk could not get out."

Both the anecdotes and the poetry can easily be enjoyed in short time frames, although a tale featuring Professor Clem, "The Bonel Prize for Littérature," is longer. That story incorporates a poem as well. Other poems are short and easily scanned. All rely on rhymes, and all are simple poems about everyday life, as exemplified by a verse from "Harry Grossfit": "To keep his diet cholesterol free, / At first was not so hard, / For breakfast melon, wheatgerm, tea / At lunch cottage cheese on chard."

Dialogue is natural, but in-depth descriptions take a back seat, not necessarily to the detriment of the collection since the illustrations are effective. The drawings resemble a cross in style between *Hägar the Horrible* and *The Family Circus*. The illustrations make up more than half the book, appearing on the opposite folio leaf from every page of text.

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GARY PRESLEY (March 9, 2017)

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