***The Witches***

***Chapter 20***

***The Heart of a Mouse***

***Summary:***

Back in Norway, the grandmother and the boy invent a few things to make the house accessible for a mouse. Even though he is a mouse, the grandmother makes him brush his teeth and take a bath every night. One night, they talk about what may have happened to Bruno, thinking that his parents could have had him killed. Then, in the calm of the warm evening, they start to talk about when the boy might die, now that he has a mouse's body. Grandmamma says that mice usually live for only about three years, but that because he is a mouse-person, he might live for around nine. The boy is surprisingly happy about this, because he says he wants to die before his grandmother so that he doesn't have to live without her. They talk about how fast his heart beats as a mouse—so fast that you cannot hear individual beats but only a "soft humming sound" (190).

***Brief Synopsis:***

* Everything about his grandma's house looks a little different now that our narrator is a mouse, but Grandmamma rigs up some cool contraptions to let him open doors and turn on lights and all that jazz.
* The only bad part (to Shmoop, at least) is that, as a mouse, he doesn't like sweets and chocolate anymore. That kind of stinks.
* One night, he's talking to his grandma, wondering what might have happened to Bruno, and he thinks of a question: "How long does a mouse live?" (21.14).
* It turns out Grandmamma had done some research into that, and mice-people live three times longer than regular mice. But that's still only about nine years.
* You might think that's bad news, but our narrator is thrilled. He doesn't want to live longer than his grandma and they both figure she won't be around much longer than nine more years anyway.
* Then Grandmamma tells our narrator something else quite interesting: a mouse's heart beats five hundred times a minute. (That's actually true. For comparison, a human's heart beats about seventy times a minute – quite a difference.)
* She tells him that she can hear his heart beat when they're cuddled up together, and that it sounds like a little humming sound.
* They sit in silence for a while, enjoying each other's company, until Grandmamma asks him if he's sure he doesn't mind being a mouse.
* He responds: "It doesn't matter who you are or what you look like so long as somebody loves you" (21.52). Cheesy alert, but, also, awesome alert!