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opening extract from

The Clumsies Make a Mess

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The Clumsies

make a mess



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Bumpy
Day



It was a Tuesday morning and everything was just as it usually was. As usual, Howard Armitage arrived at his office at a quarter to nine. As usual, he bought

a cup of coffee and two sausages
from the office canteen.

Then, as usual, he set off down
the

long
&
corridor

. . . to his room.

Suddenly there was a

booming

voice behind him.

'ARMITAGE!' it said.

It was Mr Bullerton, Howard's
boss.

'Hello, Mr Bullerton,' said
Howard.

'Hmph,' said Mr Bullerton,
crossly. 'I've just been in your
room, and it's a *mess*.

As usual.'

‘Oh, I—’ began Howard.

‘Why is it?’ said Mr Bullerton.

‘Well, err—’

‘I won’t have it,’ said Mr Bullerton.

‘No, I—’

‘Tidy it!’ said Mr Bullerton.

He gave Howard’s sausage-box a nasty look and his nostrils, which were large, gave a twitch.

**‘What’s
in the
box?’**

‘Sausages,’ said Howard.

‘Sausages?’ spluttered Mr Bullerton. ‘I hope you’re not intending to eat sausages in your office.’

‘Err, I—’

‘No eating at desks!’ said Mr Bullerton. ‘It’s unhygienic!’

‘Yes, Mr Bullerton,’ said Howard.

‘And **u n t i d y !**’

‘Yes, Mr Bullerton,’ said Howard.

‘Desks are for **working** on, not **eating** off. Any eating to be done will be done in the canteen and in the canteen *only*.



said Mr Bullerton. ‘Well, go on then.’

Howard went back to the canteen, waited until Mr Bullerton had gone, and then took his breakfast to his room, just as he always did. He was about to take a **large bite**

of sausage when there was a **rustling** noise.

‘That’s unusual,’ said Howard, and the noise stopped. Then it started again, **loudly**.

There was something under the desk, *and it was moving.* . . .

Howard **sprang** upwards
and backwards and peered
underneath. There was a bag, and
it was **twit**ching. He **prodded** it
and something small and round
SHOT out.

'Squeep!'

it said.



'Tut,' said Howard. **'A
mouse.'**

The mouse hurtled off into the
corner and Howard sat back
down. He was about to take a
large bite

of sausage when there
was another **rustling** noise.

'Now look,' said Howard.
'I've had just about enough of this.'
He

kicked

the bag and another

mouse **popped** out,
smaller and **rounder** than the first.
It started to trundle away, glancing
nervously at Howard over its
shoulder.

‘You may well
glance at me
nervously,’ said
Howard, picking
up an empty
water glass
and placing it
over the
mouse.



‘You’ll stay in there so I can eat my
breakfast in peace. I shall deal with
you afterwards.’



Howard
sat back down and
had just taken a
large mouthful
of coffee when
something
bashed his
ankle.

It was the first mouse, back again.
‘Let him out!’ squealed
the mouse, *pummelling*.

Howard

choked 

on his coffee, and the mouse
stopped pummelling.

‘Please, I mean. Please let him
out, Howard Armitage,’ said the
mouse.

Howard made a

gargling
noise, and the mouse **giggled**.

‘Here, you’ve got coffee all
down your chin,’ he said, passing
Howard a small tissue.

‘So would you, if you’d been
sprung at all over the place
and *pummelled*,’ said Howard,
mopping.

‘Sorry,’ said the
mouse. ‘It
was the
biscuits.’



‘*What* was the biscuits?’ said Howard.

‘They were in that bag,’ said the mouse, ‘and we, err, *borrowed* some, and fell asleep. If I get you some more, will you let my brother go?’

‘I don’t want *biscuits*,’ said Howard. ‘I want *sausages*.’

‘I’ll get you some sausages then,’ offered the mouse.

‘I’ve already *got* sausages,’ said Howard. ‘All I need now is a bit of calm in which to eat them. Is that too much to ask?’

‘Not at all,’ said the mouse.

‘Well, quite,’ said Howard.

Sighing, Howard lifted the water glass and the smaller, rounder mouse *scuttled* out, looking a bit hot and *very* relieved.

‘Thank you,’ said the first mouse. ‘We’ll be off then,’ and he started bundling his brother away.

‘One second,’ said Howard.

‘How do you know my name’s Howard Armitage?’

‘There’s a sign on your door that says:



“Howard Armitage”,
said the mouse, ‘so I assumed.’

‘Did you now?’ said Howard,
narrowing his eyes.

‘Isn’t it then?’ asked the mouse,
sounding **confused**.

‘As a matter of fact it is,’ said
Howard. ‘I think you’d better tell
me who you are.’

‘He’s Mickey Thompson,’ said
the mouse, **poking** his
brother’s tummy.

‘I can tell him,’ said Mickey
Thompson, **wriggling**,

and poking his brother back.

‘I’m Mickey Thompson,’
announced Mickey Thompson, to
Howard.

‘Pleased to meet you, Mickey
Thompson,’ said Howard.

‘And I’m Purvis,’ said the first
mouse, **thumping** himself
on the chest.

‘Purvis what?’ said Howard.

‘Purvis what?’ said Purvis.

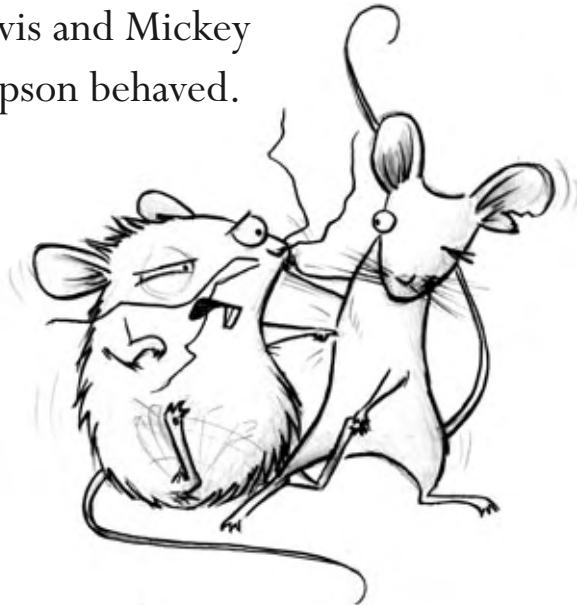
‘Or what Purvis?’ said Howard.

‘*That* Purvis,’ said Mickey
Thompson. ‘There’s only one, and
he’s him.’ Mickey Thompson

prodded Purvis in the ribs, and there was a small scuffle.

Howard's head was beginning to throb. 'That's enough, you two,' said Howard. 'When you're in my office you'll behave, or I shall put you under that glass again.'

Purvis and Mickey Thompson behaved.



'That's better,' said Howard. He went over to a side table and

clattered about,



... and finding



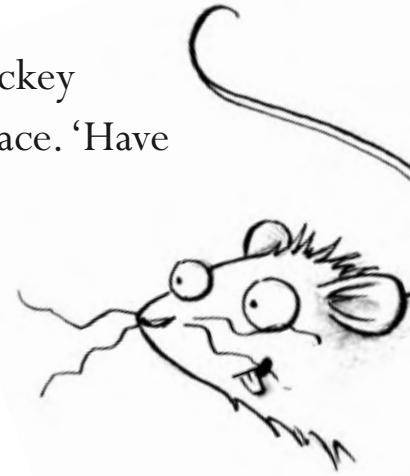
'Yes please,' said Purvis.

'Have you got any juice?' asked Mickey Thompson.

'No,' said Howard. 'It's tea or cold coffee.'

'Tea please,' said Mickey Thompson, pulling a face. 'Have you got any more

biscuits?'



'Don't push your luck,' said Howard.

While Howard made the tea the mice climbed ^uP on to his desk and had a look around.

The Clumsies Make a Mess



'It's a bit messy up here,' called Purvis, ruffling through piles of paper. 'Would you like me to help you tidy it up?'

Bumpy Day

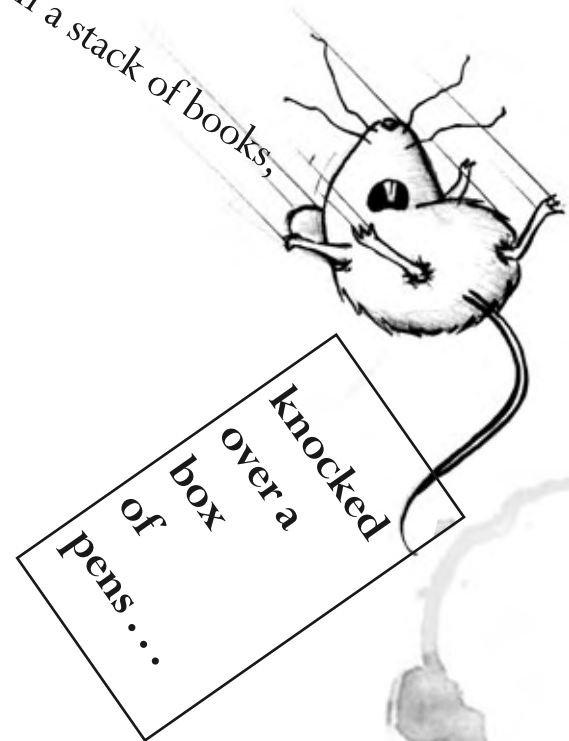
'Absolutely not,' said Howard. 'Leave everything exactly as it is.'

There was a loud

crash

as Mickey Thompson

slid off a stack of books,



Knocked over a box of pens...