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Opening extract from
**Penny Dreadful and the Horrible
Hoo-hah**

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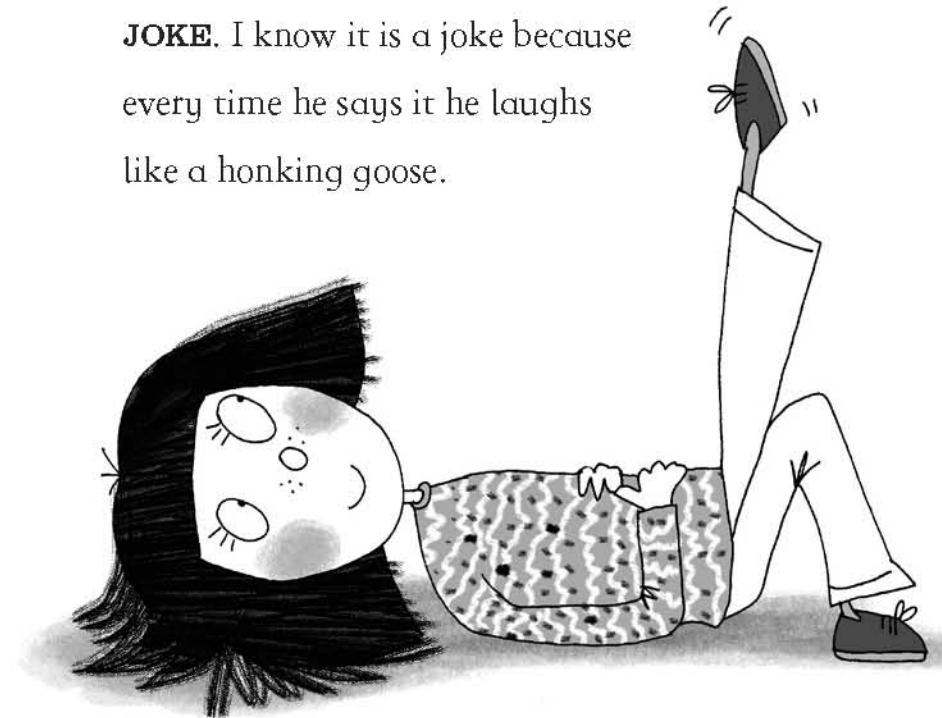
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My name is not actually
Penny Dreadful. It is Penelope Jones.

The “Dreadful” bit is my dad’s
JOKE. I know it is a joke because
every time he says it he laughs
like a honking goose.



But I do not see the funny side. Plus it is not even true that I am dreadful. It is like Gran says, i.e. that I am a **MAGNET FOR DISASTER**. Mum says if Gran kept a better eye on me in the first place instead of on *Jack Be Nimble* in the two o'clock at Newmarket then I might not be quite so magnetic. But Gran says if Mum wasn't so busy answering phones for Dr. Cement, who is her boss, and who has bulgy eyes like hard-boiled eggs (which is why everyone calls him Dr. Bugeye), and Dad wasn't so busy solving crises at the council, then they would be able to solve some crises at 73 Rollins Road, i.e. our house. So you see it is completely not my fault.



Sometimes it is the fault of my sister Daisy, who is very **IRRITATING**. And who is especially irritating when she is trying to be a pop star with her best friend Lucy B. Finnegan, because they are mostly arguing over who is going to be the main singer and who is going to do swaying hips and doo-wops, e.g. going "I am", "No I am", "No I am". So it is not my fault if I borrow the microphone while they are arguing to see if it works under water and it does not.

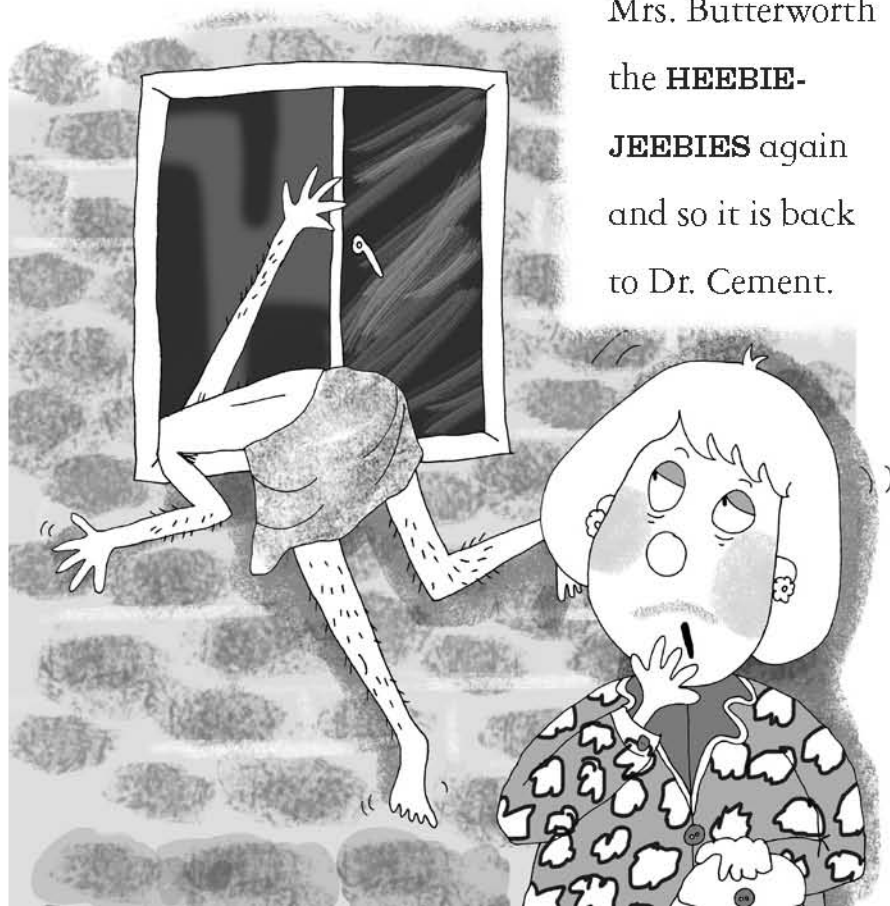


And sometimes it is the fault of Cosmo Moon Webster, who is my best friend even though he is a week older than me and a boy. Because if it wasn't for his mum Sunflower (who is actually called Barbara) being so **KEEN** on **FREEDOM** and **SELF-EXPRESSION**, then we would not have been **FREE** to paint ourselves purple and pretend to be minions of Maximus Terror, leader of the Zombiebots. And then Mrs. Butterworth (who works in the post office and has a moustache and a beady eye, which is mostly on me) would not have had the **HEEBIE-JEEBIES** and had to go to see Dr. Cement for some tonic to recover.

And sometimes it is the fault of Dad, because he is mostly saying, e.g. "I could have been an escapologist if I hadn't met your mum",

only Mum says he could not because he cannot even find his way out of the one-way system, let alone a locked cage. And it turns out she is right because when I lock him in the bathroom he completely cannot undo the door and has to come out of the window in only a towel, which gives

Mrs. Butterworth the **HEEBIE-JEEBIES** again and so it is back to Dr. Cement.



But this week it is the fault of someone else completely and that is Hilary O. Henderson, and also maybe Mum, who should have said:

- a) No dressing as **HOOLIGANS**.
- 2. No dipping things in **HONEY** and **HUNDREDS AND THOUSANDS**.
- iii) No using **MYSTERIOUS MONKEY HANDS**.

What happens is that normally I am not **KEEN** on babysitters because they are mostly old people with beady eyes and moustaches, like e.g. Mrs. Butterworth, who say no you **CANNOT** eat fourteen biscuits and then jump

up and down on the sofa to see how long it is before you are sick, you can **SIT STILL** and read a book about otters.

And Mum is not keen on babysitters either because they are mostly old people with beady eyes and moustaches, like e.g. Mrs. Butterworth, who say,

“In my day children knew the **MEANING** of the word **DISCIPLINE**.”

And Mum says **I DO** know the meaning, but she tests me and I do not, unless **DISCIPLINE** is a sort of a dinosaur. Which is

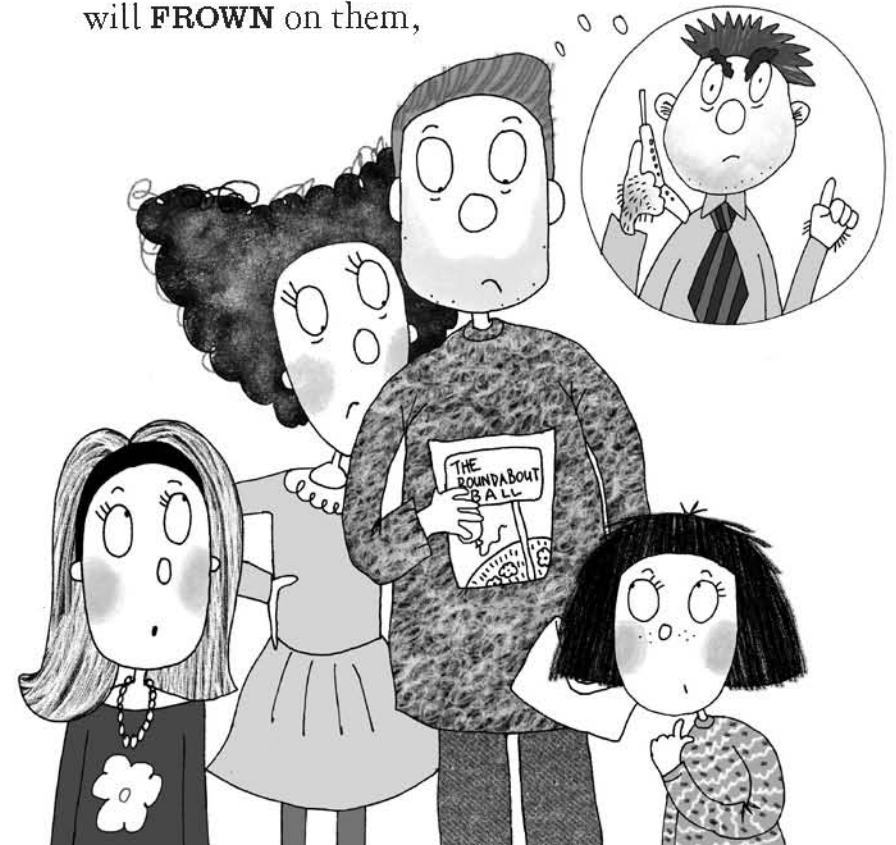


why it is either Gran who is left in charge, or if it is bingo night then no one goes out, because it is **NOT WORTH THE HOO-HAH**.

But on Saturday something **UNPREDICTABLE** happens which means no one knew it was coming (which I know because Miss Patterson, who is our teacher and who is tall and thin like a beanpole, said it was completely **UNPREDICTABLE** when the rubber I was throwing at Henry Potts, who is Cosmo's mortal enemy, pinged off a poster about potatoes and hit our headmaster Mr. Schumann on the ear just as he was coming into our class to tell us we had won Class of the Week for being excellent – only he changed his mind and it went to 3C who made a collage about cows, and I got a gold star taken away,

which I said was unfair but Mum said was completely **PREDICTABLE**).

But this **UNPREDICTABLE** thing is even more **DISASTROUS** because it is that Mum and Dad have got to go to the Roundabout Ball and they cannot say no because Mr. Hobnob, who is Dad's boss and who has hair like a hedgehog, will **FROWN** on them,

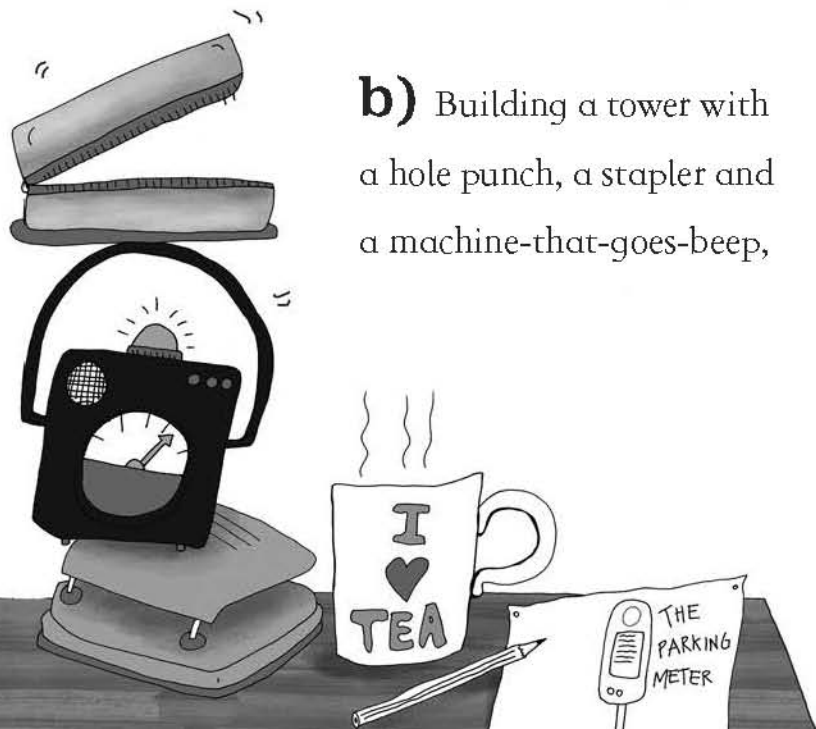


and he is already **FROWNING** on Dad for several things, i.e.:

1. Moving some traffic cones from one side of the road (which was the left side of the road) to the right side of the road (which was the **WRONG** side of the road).



b) Building a tower with a hole punch, a stapler and a machine-that-goes-beep,



which collapsed and the machine-that-goes-beep knocked over a cup of tea that went spill, and it was all over an important picture of a parking meter.

3. Going to a crucial meeting about Belisha beacons in a helmet made of a flowerpot and a remote-control car, which was not completely my fault, it was a **PATENT BRAIN-MASSAGING**

HELMET, only it was too

small for Dad's enormous brain and got stuck.



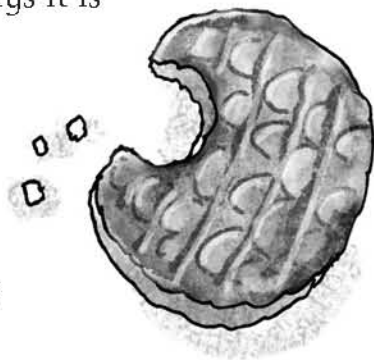


And Gran has to go dancing with her friend Arthur Peason and she cannot say no because Arthur will **FROWN** on her, and he is already **FROWNING** on her for several things, i.e.:

a) Beating him at Texas Hold 'Em seventeen times, which she says was down to beginner's luck but Arthur says was down to the ace of spades in her right pocket.

ii) Eating his last chocolate digestive even though it was not Gran, it was her cat Barry, and even though Mum says it is

CAT BISCUITS AND CAT BISCUITS ONLY.



3. Digging up George and Mildred, who are a dead rabbit and a dead guinea pig, which was not completely my fault, it was because I was being an archaeologist and I thought they were a baby two-headed dinosaur.

And Mrs. Butterworth says no she cannot babysit because she is still getting the sticky stuff out from last time. And nor can Mrs. Nugent and nor can Aunt Deedee, who says she would rather **PERISH.**

