Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

0-5 5-7 7-9 9-12 12+

opening extract from

Deenie

written by

Judy Blume

published by

Macmillan

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.



Chapter 1

My mother named me Deenie because right before I was born she saw a movie about a beautiful girl named Wilmadeene, who everybody called Deenie for short. Ma says the first time she held me she knew right away that if she named me Deenie I would turn out the same way – beautiful, that is. I was only four hours old then. And it took me almost thirteen years to find out what *really* happened to the Deenie in the movie. She went crazy and wound up on the funny farm. Ma says I should just forget about that part of the story.

The reason I know about it is the movie was on TV last night and I saw it. Even Helen, who is my older sister, who never watches anything on TV, stayed up late to see the original Deenie. It was a great movie. I really liked it, especially the scenes between Deenie and Bud. He was this guy who was madly in love with her. It was all very romantic, even when she went crazy.

There's a boy named Buddy Brader in eighth grade and I think he's kind of nice. So it is possible that there might be a real-life Deenie and Bud some day, right here in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

This morning I wanted to sleep late. Everybody I know sleeps late on Saturdays but I couldn't

because me and Ma had an appointment in New York.

My father drove us downtown in plenty of time to catch the nine-thirty bus. Before we got out of the car Ma said, 'Wish us luck, Frank. This could be the big day.'

'Just be yourself, Deenie,' Daddy told me. 'No matter what happens.'

'I'll try,' I said.

Daddy touched my cheek. Then he turned to Ma. 'Do you need any money?' he asked her.

'I've got enough,' she said. 'We're not doing any shopping.'

'Well then . . . have a good time.'

Ma leaned over and kissed him.

The bus stops on the corner by Old Lady Murray's news-stand. Ma bought a magazine and a pack of gum from her. I try not to look at Old Lady Murray because she's so ugly she makes me want to vomit. She has a big bump on her back and she can't stand up straight. You can see the bump right through her clothes. Even in winter, when she wears an old black coat, you can see it. That's a fact. But today it was warm and sunny, just the way it always is in September when you're wishing it would hurry and get cold. And Old Lady Murray was wearing a plain cotton dress. I pretended to be window shopping so I wouldn't have to look her way.

I was happy when the New York bus finally came down the street. 'Hey, Ma . . .' I called. 'Here's the bus.'

As we got on, the bus driver greeted me with, 'Hi, Beautiful!'

Ma gave him a big smile and said, 'Deenie's the beauty, Helen's the brain.'

The bus driver didn't say anything else because what does he know about our family? He was probably sorry he bothered with us in the first place. I hate it when Ma brags about me and Helen. One time Midge and Janet were over and Ma started in about Helen's brain and my face and I almost died! Later, I told her, 'Please don't do that again, Ma. You embarrassed me in front of my friends.' But Ma just laughed and said, 'I was only telling the truth, Deenie.'

Ma took our tickets from the bus driver and sat down in the second row of seats, next to the window. She dusted off the seat next to her with a tissue before she'd let me sit in it. Then she settled back and pretty soon she was dozing off. I looked out the window for a while but the view from the New Jersey Turnpike's not so hot, so I started thinking instead.

My mother wants me to be a model, with my face on all the magazine covers. Ma says I'll make a lot of money and maybe get discovered for the movies too. A teenage model has to make it by

the time she's seventeen if she's ever going to make it big. So the next four years will be very important to me. The thing that really scares me is I'm not sure I want to be a model. I would never tell that to Ma, but I've told Daddy. He says I don't have to be unless I want to.

Today is the third time this month that we're going to a modelling agency. The first one Aunt Rae read about in *TV Guide*. It was an ad that said, 'Be a model or just look like one.' When we got to that agency the lady in charge told my mother that I had a lot of potential and wouldn't Ma like to enrol me in a modelling course for only $250? They'd be able to teach me how to walk the right way and everything.

But Ma told the lady, 'My daughter already knows how to walk and with her face we don't need to pay anybody. Shes the one who's going to get paid.'

After that Ma and Aunt Rae found out about some real modelling agencies. The kind that gets you paying jobs. We went to one two Saturdays ago. The lady there told Ma they were very interested in me, except for my posture, which wasn't great. Since then I've been walking around with books on my head. I hope that's helped, so Ma will leave me alone.

The bus stopped at the Port Authority building on Eighth Avenue. We rode the escalator down to

the main level and walked outside to the corner where we took the crosstown bus. 'Once you get started modelling we'll be able to afford taxis,' Ma said.

'That'll be nice,' I told her. My feet were already hurting. Ma says I should stop wearing sneakers. They make your feet spread so your regular shoes don't fit right any more.

When we got to the modelling agency there were two girls waiting to be interviewed ahead of me. I sat down next to one of them. She was by herself. I guess she was at least sixteen and very pretty.

She had her portfolio on her lap. My mother carries mine. It's like a loose-leaf notebook filled with photographs of me. Ma hired this guy to take a whole mess of pictures over the summer. In some of them I'm wearing wigs. I think I look kind of funny and much older than I really am.

'Are you a model?' I asked the girl.

'Yes,' she said. 'Are you?'

'I'm just getting started. Is it fun?'

'It's okay,' she said. 'It's a lot harder than most people think. You have to sit under hot lights for hours. Sometimes I get so bored I practically fall asleep.'

'I thought it would be more exciting than that,' I said.

'The money's pretty good,' she told me. 'That's

why I do it. I hope I get this job. It could lead to a commercial.'

The receptionist called, 'Rachel Conrad . . .' and the girl next to me stood up.

'Good luck,' I said.

'Thanks. You too.'

When Rachel came out the receptionist called, 'Linda Levin . . .' and this very tall girl got up and went in.

'We're next, Deenie,' Ma said.

'I have to go to the bathroom,' I whispered.

'Now? You should have thought of that before.'

'I didn't have to go before.'

'Well, hurry up.'

When I get nervous I don't sweat or shake or anything but I always feel like I've got to go to the bathroom. I asked the receptionist where to go and when I came out Ma said, 'It's our turn . . . I better put some drops in your eyes before we go in. They're a little bloodshot.' She opened her bag.

'Not now, Ma!' I told her, glancing at the receptionist.

'Deenie Fenner . . .' she called.

Me and Ma stood up and the receptionist showed us into a small office. The walls were covered with pictures of beautiful girls. A lady was sitting behind a big glass-topped desk. 'Are you Deenie?' she asked.

'Yes,' I answered.

She held out her hand. 'I'm Mrs Allison.'

My mother reached over and shook hands with her. 'I'm Thelma Fenner, Deenie's mother.'

Mrs Allison smiled at me. She had a space between her two front teeth. 'So you want to be a model . . .' she said.

'Yes.'

Ma said, 'I have her portfolio right here, Mrs Allison.' She handed it to her.

Mrs Allison opened it up to the first page. 'What a sweet baby,' she said.

I felt my face turn red. I wish Ma would get rid of that picture.

'That's Deenie when she was sixteen months old,' Ma said. 'She's won a national contest and had her picture in all the magazines, advertising baby food.'

'Have you worked as a model since then, Deenie?' Mrs Allison asked.

'No,' I told her. 'My father didn't want me to at least until I started junior high. I'm in seventh grade now.'

'Modelling *is* hard work,' Mrs Allison said. 'I don't blame your father.' She flipped through my portfolio.

I wiggled my toes around inside my shoes. The big toe on my left foot hurt bad. I think I cut my toenails wrong again. They're always getting ingrown and infected.

When Mrs Allison was through looking at my pictures she zipped up my portfolio and said, 'You're a pretty girl, Deenie.'

'Thank you,' I said.

'Let's see you walk around the room.'

I glanced at Ma but she just smiled at me. I got up and walked across the room. The worst part of these interviews is having people stare at you while you walk around. I feel like a real klunk. When I finished crossing the room I stood in front of Mrs Allison's desk and turned around in a slow circle, the way Ma taught me.

Mrs Allison stood up and walked around her desk. She put her hands on my shoulders. 'Relax Deenie,' she said. 'You're too stiff.' She moved my head back and forth and kind of rearranged my shoulders. 'Now, try walking this way. You'll be more comfortable.'

I crossed the room again. I saw Mrs Allison make some notes on her pad. Then I stood in front of her and waited.

Mrs Allison looked at me without saying anything, and I was sure if I stood there for one more minute I would have to go to the bathroom again. I shifted from one foot to the other while I waited for her to say something.

Finally she said, 'I don't know, Deenie. There's something about the way you move that's not quite right. But your face is very lovely and you do

photograph well. Let me think about you for a while. I'll be in touch.'

Mrs Allison stood up then and held her hand out to me. I shook it this time while Ma grabbed my portfolio off her desk.

'Thank you for coming, Mrs Fenner,' Mrs Allison told Ma. 'And for bringing Deenie.'

My mother nodded and took my arm, leading me out of the office. All the way down in the elevator Ma held on to my arm and she didn't say anything, not one word. When we were on the street she steered me into a lunchroom. We sat opposite each other, in a booth. Ma ordered a cheeseburger for each of us and when the waitress was gone I said, 'I'm sorry, Ma.'

'It looked like you slouched on purpose, Deenie.'

'I didn't, Ma. Honest. Why would I do that? I tried as hard as I could.' Tears came to my eyes.

'Don't give me that, Deenie. You heard Mrs Allison say there's something funny about the way you move.'

'Please, Ma . . . please believe me . . . I didn't do it on purpose.'

My mother didn't say anything for a minute. I took a sip of water. Finally, Ma said, 'Deenie, God gave you a beautiful face. Now He wouldn't have done that if He hadn't intended for you to put it to good use.'

'I know it, Ma.'

'I hope so. Because I'm not going through this again. Next time we have an appointment you'll have to try harder.'

'But Mrs Allison didn't say *no* to us, Ma. She said she'd think about me, remember?'

'That means *no*, Deenie. So we'll have to try another agency.'

'Can't we wait a little while? Maybe until next year?'

'Don't be silly,' Ma said. 'We don't want to waste time when you're ready now.' She reached out and patted my hand. 'I know this is hard for you, Deenie, but some day you'll thank me. You'll see.'

When the waitress brought our lunch I didn't feel like eating anything, but one thing that makes Ma really mad is seeing good food go to waste.