My name is PETUNIA PERRY.
I am 12 years old.
I am sitting in my WARDROBE
writing my memoirs because...

EVERYONE at my new school thinks I'm WEIRD.

I ACCIDENTALLY spat
TUNA SANDWICH on the boy I like.

My best friend Cammy spent ALL of our
band money on PERSONALISED SOCKS.

I have been CURSED by an UGLY PIGEON!

These things might NEVER
happen to you, but, if they DO,
you'll be glad you read
about them HERE first...







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PETUNIA PERRY AND THE CURSE OF THE UGLY PIGEON

PAMELA BUTCHART

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FROM BEST-SELLING AUTHOR
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ILLUSTRATED BY
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To: Epic Records

From: Peri

(Real name inflicted by parents = Petunia. Why would they do this? What did I ever do to them?)



Date: 6th November

Time: 2am (I may have insomnia)

Place: My wardrobe

Age: Recently turned 12 (it was weird – you'll soon see why)

Mood: In desperate need of a Mars bar (but I'd settle for a Twix)

Best friend: Cammy (even though I'm 100% sure she hates me, and 93.5% sure I saw her making a voodoo doll of me in Food Technology today)

I love: Ham. Pugs. NOT being accused of spoon theft

You love: I'm sure that's your own private business, but please insert here if you wish:_____

_____

Margaret's advice: Unavailable (FYI: Margaret is a cat. She is also awesome)

Issues: (1) Possible lack of oxygen due to confined space. (2) I know that this will make you just as sad and angry as me, Epic Records, but I need to tell you

that the most unique band (ever!) recently split because my band mate Cammy won't speak to me (she thinks I blabbed her weird name-secret, which I kind of did, but it was an accident!). This now means that I am bandless and friendless, and that YOU have missed out on being our label. Epic Records, I know that this won't be easy to hear, but our band had a cat in it. THAT'S how unique it was!

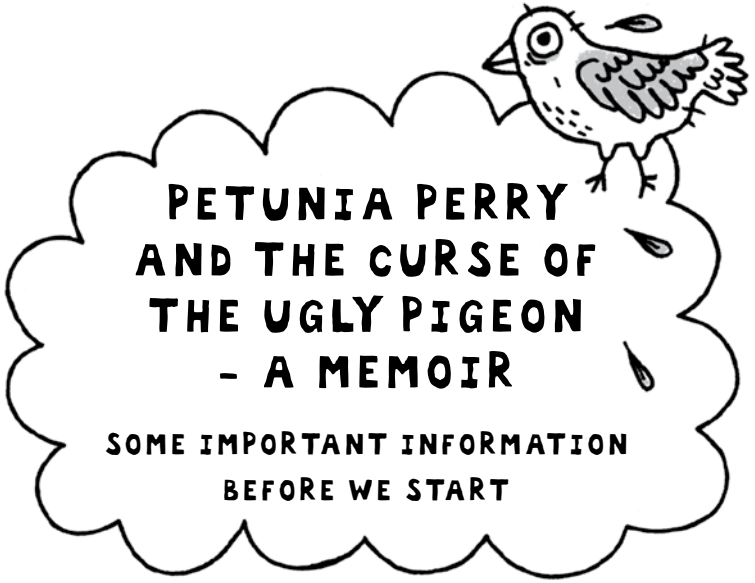
Next steps: I have decided that I am going to deal with this situation by writing my memoirs (since I am no longer in the band once deemed the "Next Big Thing" by Cammy's mum).

Thanks for listening.

Try not to let this break you.

Yours sincerely

Petunia Perry



PETUNIA PERRY AND THE CURSE OF THE UGLY PIGEON - A MEMOIR

SOME IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE WE START

My grossly under-deodorised English teacher says it's important to "set the scene" when beginning a story, so I shall now tell you that while I write this I am sitting in my wardrobe with a torch, like someone at sea in an old movie. You may think it's weird that I'm sitting in a wardrobe. Or you may have just assumed that I am mega-rich and have one of those huge walk-in, room-sized wardrobes that you could easily fit a call-centre inside. If you are thinking either of these things then you are wrong because:

1 It is not weird (unusual, yes, but not weird). Because it said on the Internet that if you

want to be a serious writer, you must have a separate "writing room". My writing room is a wardrobe with a small chair in it (we all have to start somewhere). Although it's quite cramped, Mum's winter coats (which she INSISTS on keeping in MY wardrobe) are actually quite comfortable (even though they smell of Old).



2 I am *not* rich. Far from it! Mum makes us walk everywhere, even though we own a car. I can only assume we are too poor to buy petrol as I do not buy her "health reasons" excuse. I suppose she is only being a good mother who is just trying to shield me from the knowledge of our poverty. Whatever happens, I am NOT having another car-boot sale to make money. Regardless of what Dad says, I still believe that's how I got chicken pox.

3 I am hiding away in my wardrobe because I can never show my human face to the world ever again after all of the horrific-ness that has happened recently.

I am also writing in a wardrobe because apparently my bedroom is a public area. Dad came into my room earlier and asked me what I was writing (he is a man of no boundaries). Then he tried to tell me that memoirs are for people who have died. I told him I expect to die of humiliation any day now. He said that that was "DEAD FUNNY". And then he cracked up for about twenty minutes.

I did not know I was living with a comedy genius.

Note to reader: That was sarcasm. It is very important that you understand sarcasm and have (hopefully) already started to practise it. If you did not get this, then you are probably too young to be reading my memoirs. You no doubt still think your mum and dad are "great", and might well be sat in a paddling pool full of colourful plastic balls. But

please keep reading anyway. It will prepare you for what's coming (chronic humiliation by parents, for which there is no cure).

A Bit About Me

It feels a bit stupid putting a "Bit About Me" section in here, you know, since these are *my* memoirs, and are therefore *all* about me. But I suppose it's important that before we start, you know something about who I am and what my beef is with my mum and dad. I suppose you'll also probably want to know why my best friend was making a voodoo doll of me in Food Technology.

OK. So…

1. Who am I?

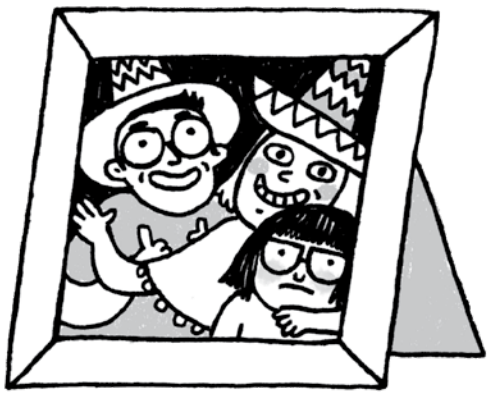
I am Petunia Perry (but everyone calls me Peri).
Please read on for the full (weird) story.

2. Where am I?

I've almost made it through my first term at Fortress Academy.

3. What is my beef with my parents?

They are my parents.
Normal Parents = Occasionally embarrassing.
My Parents = Me sitting in a wardrobe doing this.



4. Why did your best friend make a voodoo doll of you in Food Technology?

Because she thinks I told everyone about her "Deep, Dark Secret". Then everything got a little out of hand, because (awful) Jessica Clark got involved, turned Cammy against me and completely ruined our chance of worldwide cat-band fame!

conclusion

My best friend will most likely never speak to me *ever* again. Our dreams of band fame and possible musical world domination are over. And my mum is probably sitting downstairs right now flicking through *Every Parent's Guide to Total Offspring Humiliation Part 2* for inspiration.

Welcome to the tragic life of me, Petunia Perry.



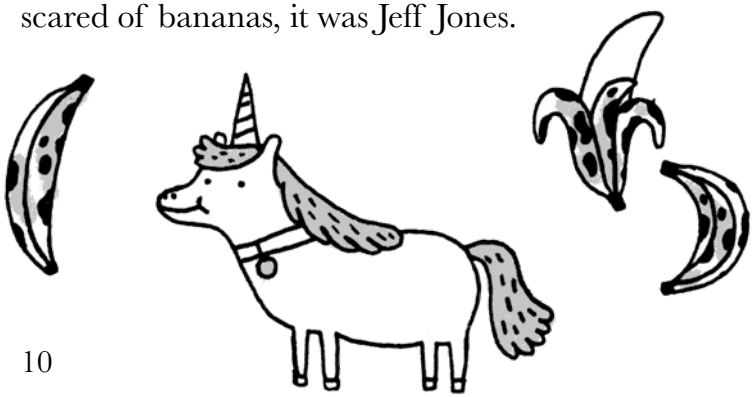
Note to reader: I have decided to sometimes include a "lesson" in my memoirs. Hopefully this will help you (the reader) to avoid potentially cringeful or even full-blown humiliating situations.

Everything began to go wrong when we started at Fortress Academy. When me and Cammy were in primary school, there never even used to be an "I'm-so-great-I-poop-diamonds" group *or* an "ugly-pigeon-person" group. Life was much easier back then, when people used to be judged on important things, like how far you could swing back on your chair without cracking your skull open, or who could

win a semi-final staring competition, or who was sick enough to do the "Sick-Lick" (which is when someone dares you to lick someone else's nose for a pound). These were simpler and, I would argue, better times.

I remember the time Lewis Draper challenged Sally Gold to a "Black Banana Eating Contest" because he had heard that Sally Gold was too scared to eat the black bits and that she always left the last three centimetres of her banana to avoid potential spider's eggs.

Apparently, Sally Gold saw a programme that said sometimes spiders lay their eggs in the bottom of bananas, and if you eat them, thousands of spiders hatch inside you, and then you die. But it turned out that Lewis Draper had been given "unreliable information" by Max Martin (who claims to have a pet unicorn) and it WASN'T Sally Gold who was scared of bananas, it was Jeff Jones.



So anyway, a note was sent round our primary school telling everyone to save their bananas from the canteen until the day of the challenge. So we did. And everyone made sure they picked the spottiest banana from the fruit bowl every day for two weeks. I even saw some people punching their bananas to make sure they went all bruised and squishy.

Then when the day of the "Black Banana Eating Contest" came, Lewis Draper went first and put his hand into the "Black Banana Bag" and pulled out a medium-bad one (it was covered in tiny brown dots, but had no obvious big black bits) and everyone went, "OooooOOOO" (which meant he was lucky because we all knew what was lurking in there). Then it was Sally's turn, and she pulled out a medium-bad one too.

They were both quite lucky for a while because they kept getting OK-ish ones. But then when they had both eaten about four bananas each, Lewis pulled out "THE BLACK BEAST". (And the rule is that you're not allowed to put any bananas back, so you HAVE to eat The Black Beast if you get it, or you lose.)



Note to reader: The Black Beast is the oldest, blackest, mouldiest banana in the bag.

So we all watched as Lewis peeled the rotten skin back slowly. The banana was even blacker inside than it was on the outside. Lewis raised it to his mouth, but then he must have caught a whiff of it because he started to gag. And then he said he couldn't do it, and that he was going to be sick.

So we all started cheering, "Sall-Y, Sall-Y, Sall-Y!" because this meant that Sally Gold was the new Black Banana Champion. But then Sally grabbed The Black Beast out of Lewis's hand and ate it all in one bite. And that's when everyone stopped cheering, and we all felt a bit sick. And to this day, nobody knows why she did it because she had already won.



After that, everyone stopped doing the "Black Banana Eating Contest" and now everyone calls Sally "The Beast". Unfortunately for Sally, the Black Banana story spread fast (since it *was* pretty shocking) and it wasn't long before everyone at all the other schools in our area knew about "The Beast" too. Cammy even said that her cousin heard the story at *his* school, and he lives in Ireland!

So there you go. I guess bad news really *does* travel fast. So as soon as we started at Fortress (and the pointless popularity-rating began) Sally was automatically placed in the least-popular group (even though she is the current "Black Banana Eating Champion"!). Popularity is messed up. I mean, one minute you're an absolute legend, then before anyone can say, "Please-don't-eat-that-it's-clearly-diseased" you're an outcast, forced to eat your lunch on your own in the long grass. Like a gorilla.

Anyway, as I was saying, instead of being judged on guts and bravery and cleverness, some "genius" decided that once we get to secondary school, we should all be judged on stupid, non-important things like hair, and smell, and teeth. And then put into "groups". So really, secondary school is just like a

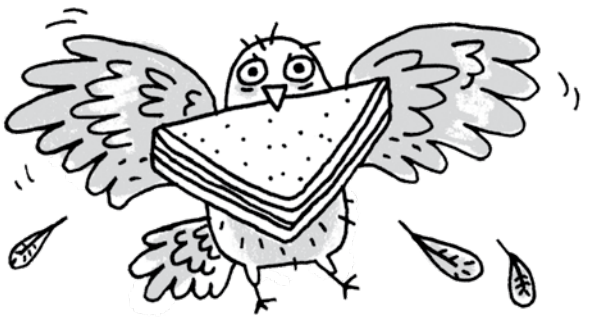
fancy dog show. But with people. And less peeing against table legs (depending on which school you go to).

And then the whole "Ugly Pigeon" thing started!



Note to reader: The "Ugly Pigeon" was a pigeon that used to terrorise everyone when we first started at Fortress.

The Ugly Pigeon was obsessed with cheese sandwiches, and if you had one, and it saw you, you were in for it. The Ugly Pigeon would run at you, flap its scabby wings and screech until you gave in and dropped your lunch. I didn't even know that



pigeons could screech like that until I stupidly got a cheese sandwich and took it outside.

The Ugly Pigeon had loads of feathers missing and scars because it used to fight with the seagulls and crows for all the playground leftovers (and I'm pretty sure I saw it with a weapon one time). Then one day, someone noticed that it hadn't been around for a while, and that's when the rumours started. Some people said it was dead, some people said it had gone to terrorise another school, and Max Martin said he saw Mr Lump take it home to be his pet when he retired last week. (Max Martin has "truth-telling" issues.)

Then someone came up with the worst thing ever – the Ugly Pigeon Wind. And everyone believed it, even Charles Wainsworth, who doesn't believe in ANYTHING spooky or supernatural and once had an argument with Miss Morgan (who teaches RE) for a whole period. At the end, Miss Morgan said that it hadn't been an argument, and that it had been a "discussion". But I didn't believe her because she looked like she wanted to smash his face in with her stapler.

Anyway, the Ugly Pigeon Wind became a thing



when three girls in our year started crying about it in PE. They said that they had walked past where the Ugly Pigeon used to "hunt" and they had felt a "breeze". And that the "breeze" had felt weird and they just *knew* it was the spirit of the Ugly Pigeon.

Then a few other girls started crying too, and before you know it, there was this sort of "vigil" thing in the playground with candles and flowers, and one girl had even drawn a picture of the Ugly Pigeon and put it in a frame. Then a sign was put up that said there was going to be a memorial service the next day at lunch (and that gifts were optional).

So me and Cammy went along, because it seemed like the right thing to do. There were loads of people there, and they were all telling stories about how "loveable" and "sweet" the Ugly Pigeon had been. Then at the end people started laying down cheese sandwiches, and I felt *terrible* because we hadn't brought anything.

So Cammy searched in her bag and found some raisins, and we put those down. But that made people tut at us, as if to say, "The Ugly Pigeon would have HATED those! Why don't you just bring him back to life and KILL HIM AGAIN?!"

For about a week after the service, people kept sitting beside the Ugly Pigeon's shrine and leaving their crusts behind at lunch. But after a while everyone kind of forgot about it all until Jessica Clark (uurgghh) came to school one day with a permed mullet and blamed it on the Ugly Pigeon.



At first people were shocked. The "U.P." had become a bit of a legend at our school and no one likes a fallen hero. But then everyone quickly started to agree with Jessica (since she's the most popular girl in our year and therefore powerful).

Jessica said that she had accidentally stood on a crust when she walked past the Ugly Pigeon's shrine on her way to the hairdresser. Then Jessica said that when she was getting her hair cut she had felt the Ugly Pigeon Wind and knew that the Ugly Pigeon had followed her to the hairdresser and cursed her hair and turned it into a permed mullet. One of Jessica's friends dared to suggest that it might've just been a hairdryer Jessica felt. Now that poor girl eats lunch with "The Beast".

Shortly after Jessica's permed mullet experience, everyone decided that the Ugly Pigeon was an "evil presence". And that his evil spirit was haunting the school, trying to make everyone just as ugly as he had once been.

So the shrine was promptly dismantled and people stopped wearing their "R.I.P. U.P." badges.

I felt a bit sorry for the Ugly Pigeon, but at least people were finally acknowledging that this bird hadn't exactly been nice when it was alive. I think the Ugly Pigeon would have wanted to be remembered exactly as he was (a terror).

A girl called Hectoria was the first "official" curse victim of the Ugly Pigeon (after it was somehow decided that what had happened to Jessica didn't count, and that in fact, her "experience" had given her some sort of "sixth sense" that allowed her to see who was *really* cursed by the Ugly Pigeon).

Me and Cammy found Hectoria crying next to her locker after Jessica had drawn the Ugly Pigeon symbol on it in pink lipstick. So I suggested Hectoria dress up as an actual pigeon and chase Jessica and

the rest of the "populars" around school with real pigeon poo on a stick. Cammy even offered to help her collect the poo! But Hectoria decided that the best thing to do would be to straighten her hair, start wearing her mum's make-up to school and burn her days-of-the-week tights (which was a tragedy because on the first week of secondary school Hectoria wore her Friday tights on a Thursday by mistake, and Mr Hanson let us leave school early because he thought it was Friday – it was brilliant!).

I stopped feeling sorry for Hectoria shortly after I became the second victim. It was horrible. I came out of History to find a HUGE Ugly Pigeon had been drawn on my locker. Everyone was laughing and pointing and "coo-coo-ing" at me (which was mortifying AND factually inaccurate, since the Ugly Pigeon did not "coo-coo" – he screeched). I should have known then that I was cursed.

So, after the whole "being-crowned-U.P. thing" by the horrible girls in our year, that's when me and Cammy made a pact that no matter how mean, giggly, hair-straightener-y and BORING all the girls in our year became under Jessica's rule, we would NOT run home and put our mum's make-up

on or burn fantastic and helpful legwear. We would resist.

Cammy called it "having bones". Which I *think* means the same as "having guts". It's sometimes hard to understand Cammy. She's a bit weird – in a good way (well, most of the time).

Then Cammy made us both sign the "Declaration of Self Independence", which said stuff like:

- We will be ourselves and stay EXACTLY the same as we were in primary school.
- We will still do ALL the fun things we've always done (Metal Detector Tuesdays, for example, will live on forever!).
- We will NOT wear lip gloss, straighten our hair or use fancy shampoo (but we will wear deodorant).
- We will refer to the "populars" as the "poopulars".
- We will do whatever we want, just like we always have, even if it's not what other people do.
- We will never EVER stop being best friends and we will never EVER let anything or anyone break the band of our friendship!

The moment I signed it Cammy literally started screaming. I looked up and saw that she was smiling and tugging her hair (yes, I'm aware that this is not normal behaviour, but that's just Cammy). But I knew EXACTLY what was happening. Cammy had just had a FANTASTICALABULOUS idea (which is what we call ideas when words like "fantastic" and "brilliant" just aren't enough).

I could see that Cammy was struggling to verbalise the idea. Her mouth was trying to do – well, something, and her arms were waving all over the place. This idea was BIG.



"You OK, Cammy?" I asked, trying to remember the first-aid training we'd had in Year 6. But then all of a sudden Cammy grabbed a pen and started DRAWING ON HER BEDROOM WALL. That's how serious this was.

I watched as she manically scrawled over her Harry Potter wallpaper. At first I thought she might write, "HELP! I'M CHOKING!" but she didn't. She began drawing what looked like a fried egg on Dumbledore's forehead. Then she began merging his eyes together and giving them legs. And that's when I realised she was drawing a guitar. But it wasn't until she turned Harry's scar into a saxophone (Cammy is quite skilled with a marker pen) that I realised what her FANTASTICALABULOUS idea was.

She wanted us to start a band!



Cammy and I weren't always best friends. I mean, we were always *friends* but we never used to be proper (capital letters) Best Friends.

It happened during a Year 5 school trip to see the worst film in the world. That was the day our best friendshipness was sealed.

Cammy says it was fate, but I'm pretty certain it was the cheese.

Note to reader: Cammy's full name is Camembert. In case you don't know, Camembert is also the name of a rather stinkful French cheese (Cammy's mum's a bit weird).

Sometimes people make fun of Cammy, like the time she did Show and Tell in the style of an opera, rather than just saying it in a normal voice like everyone else. But that's just Cammy.

Cammy doesn't usually care if people at school laugh at her. The only thing that REALLY upsets her is when people make fun of her full name. Being called Camembert never used to bother her that much (probably because most people in Year 5 don't know what it is). But that all changed the day Robb Silverman caused a "scene" at the cinema.

OK, so what happened is our old teacher (Mr Fran) wanted us to see "history in action" so he took us all to some film about the Victorians (which was terrible). The only good thing about going on the trip was that Mr Fran had said we could bring snacks with us (and I LOVE snacks).

Mum never buys good snacks like chocolate or popcorn unless it's a special occasion (like Christmas, my birthday or when she's ready to "take her boss's life"). But for some strange, unknown reason, this trip to the cinema to see an educational film was deemed by Mum to be a "special occasion". I thought this was a bit weird, but hey, why argue!

So anyway, Cammy brought snacks too. However, Cammy's mum is a bit of a foodie and likes really weird things like olives and anchovies, and she absolutely *loves* CAMEMBERT CHEESE. And (unfortunately) this food-weirdness has rubbed off on Cammy.

So when the film started, Cammy pulled a full cheeseboard out of her bag (it even had a little bunch of grapes on the side!). And as soon as she cut into the Camembert, this terrible, sweet-yet-pungently-horrid smell escaped. Cammy didn't seem to notice. But Robb Silverman did. He was sitting in front of us and he started screaming, "OH MY GOD! Was that you? *WAS THAT YOU?!*" to the boy sitting next to him.

Then all the boys started blaming each other, and holding their noses, while Cammy just sat there slicing away, completely unaware that the smell was coming from her.

That's when Mr Fran came rushing up the steps to see what all the fuss was about, and told everyone to "Pipe down!"

And then he said, "Stop it! It's just Camembert. Camembert's a smelly cheese." And then he pointed



RIGHT AT CAMMY.

I couldn't believe it.

Why didn't he just take Cammy's cheese knife and stab her in the back with it?

That would have been less painful!

Robb Silverman and the rest of the boys stared at Mr Fran with their mouths wide open. And then they all looked at Cammy and burst out laughing.

For weeks after that everyone held their nose when Cammy walked past them in the corridor, and burst out laughing when her name was read out on the register and chanted "Sme-lly CHEESE! Sme-lly

CHEESE!" at her at least fifty times a day.

You see, the tragic thing was that Robb Silverman and the rest of the boys didn't realise that Mr Fran had been talking about the CHEESE being smelly. They thought Mr Fran had actually called CAMMY a smelly cheese!

Mr Fran became quite popular after that, and when we were getting off the bus that day, Robb Silverman patted him on the back and called him a "legend".

And to make a really bad situation even worse, Mr Fran took being called a "legend" the wrong way, and I guess he felt all "inspired" or something because the next week he took us all to see a THREE-HOUR-LONG play about "Roman times". But thankfully this time Cammy just took an apple.

So anyway, on the bus going home after the "incident", I decided to take Cammy's mind off the fact that Robb Silverman kept squeezing his face between the space in the seats in front of us and whispering, "I bet your feet smell like Cheddar, don't they?" I did this by deciding to share a secret with her that I had never shared with anyone.

That's when I told Cammy that my real name

is Petunia, and that through a series of (bizarre but fortunate) events, I'd managed to hide it from everyone for years.

"But Petunia's a nice name," Cammy whispered when I told her.

"So is Camembert," I lied.

"No it's not," she said. "It's a cheese, Peri. But thanks." And she was right, so I just smiled and didn't say anything.

"So," whispered Cammy, looking excited. "Tell me how you've kept it a secret!" And then she pushed our jackets into the space between the seats in front to block out Robb Silverman's face.