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opening extract from

Mr Gum and the Biscuit Billionaire

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Chapter 1

On Boaster's Hill

It all started late one afternoon in the peaceful little town of Lamonic Bibber. Summer was almost at an end and the day stretched out long and lazy like a huge glossy panther made of time. The birds chirped in the trees, the rabbits chirped in their burrows, and a fox walked along

the railway tracks whistling 'Greensleeves' and thinking fondly of a vixen he had once loved.

Up on Boaster's Hill a little girl sat reading a book called '**Cobbler Wins The Prizes**'. Now this little girl's name was Polly and she was the sort of girl you could be friends with. She was brilliant at running and jumping and scabbing up her knees and she didn't have no time for nonsense, OK? She was brave and honest and true and when she laughed the sunlight went

splashing off her pretty teeth like diamonds in search of adventure.

But where were the laughter and diamondy teeth now? Nowhere, because Polly was bored.

"**Cobbler Wins The Prizes**' is full of escapades but that's just a book,' she complained to herself. 'Nothin' exciting never happens 'round here. An' that whopper dog Jake never even comes 'round to play no more!'

For alas, it was true. Polly hadn't seen big

Jake all summer long. Oh, how she missed riding on his huge furry back and pretending he was a horse or a spaceship!

'Jakey!' she called hopefully, in case he just happened to be nearby, playing cards with a dormouse or something – but there was no answering woof to be heard.

'Sigh,' sighed Polly with a sigh. 'First no adventures an' now no Jakey. It's well unfair.'



And with that she lay back in the long grass. The hot sun beat down and soon she was drifting, drifting away . . .



When Polly awoke it was dusk and the afternoon had grown fat with shadows. A low breeze whispered secrets in the bushes and the light was all funny and golden, full of magic and mystery and moths.

'What strangery is this?' whispered Polly. Her hair was standing on end and her arms were covered in goosebumps. It felt like something was going to happen.

And then, sure enough, something did happen. A little figure appeared over the top of Boaster's Hill. It was the strangest little man Polly had ever pointed her eyes at. For a start, he was only 15.24 centimetres tall. And he was made entirely out of gingerbread, with raisins for eyes. And he had electric muscles so he could walk

around like you or me, and blue sparks came off him whenever he moved. And what's more, he carried an enormous biscuit tin and it was stuffed full of money. And as you know, money is worth a lot of money. And there was an awful lot of money in that tin, and that's a fact.

'Hello,' said the little weirdy, skipping over to where Polly sat. 'I am Alan Taylor.'



'I'm Polly,' replied Polly in wonder. 'Are you from Fairymagic Dream Land where the rivers run with lemonade and the streets are paved with unicorns?'

'Please don't make fun of me,' said Alan Taylor. 'Haven't you ever seen a gingerbread man with electric muscles before?'

'Sorry, I haven't,' replied Polly in embarrassment. 'I'm only nine. And I didn't mean to make no fun.'