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opening extract from

Grubtown Tales: Stinking Rich and Just Plain Stinky

written by

Philip Ardagh

published by

Faber and Faber

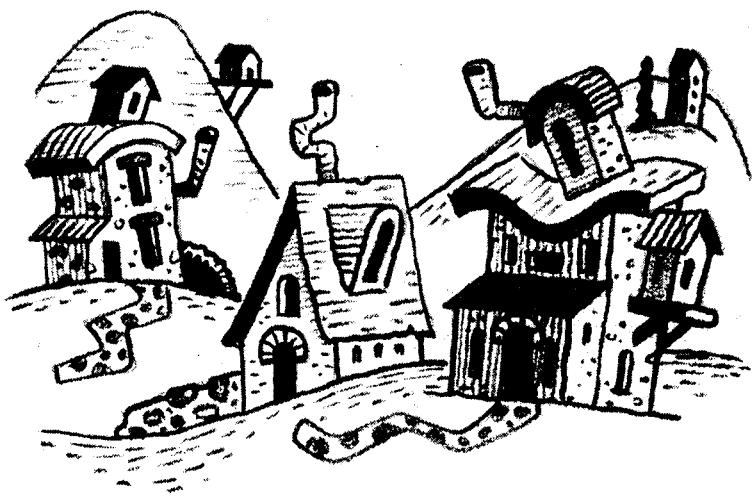
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A bit about Grubtown

You won't find Grubtown on any maps. The last time any map-makers were sent anywhere near the place they were found a week later wearing nothing but pages from a telephone directory, and calling for their mothers. It's certainly a town and certainly grubby – except for the squeaky clean parts – but everything else we know about the place comes from Beardy Ardagh, town resident and author of these tales.



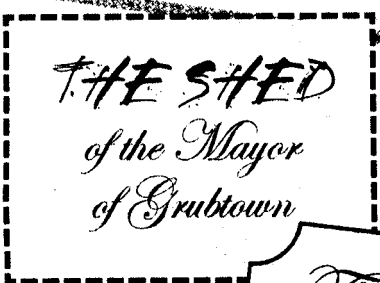
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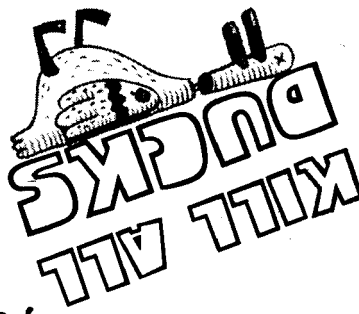




THE GRUBTOWN RIFLE CLUB

THE GRUBTOWN TRIFLE (& JELLIES) CLUB

THE GRUBTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT

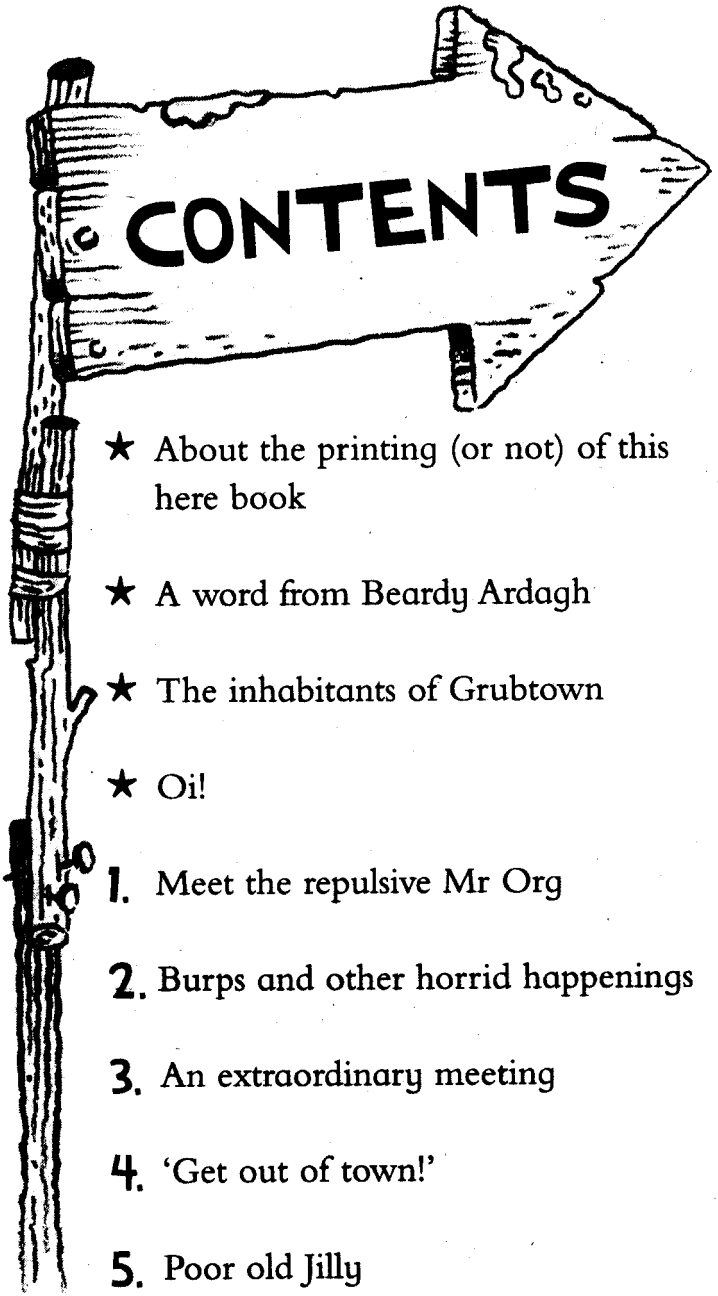


Wretching's Dairy

JIP
THE PELICAN
★ ★ ★
GRUBTOWN'S OFFICIAL MASCOT

GRUBTOWN COASTGUARD & DECKCHAIR DEPARTMENT

THE RUSTY DOLPHIN CAFE



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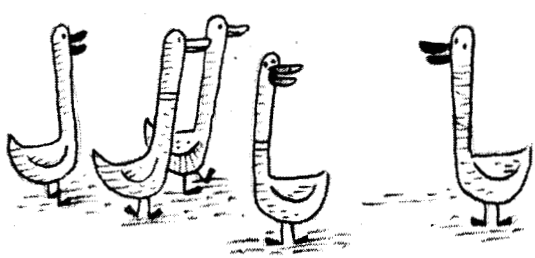
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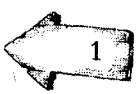
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A short message about the printing (or not) of this here book

This book was originally going to be printed by **GRUBTOWN PRINTERS & CAKE DECORATORS (ESTABLISHED 1908, PROPRIETOR MR PALTRY FEEDBACK)** until Beardy Ardagh (who wrote it) had a falling out with Paltry Feedback over which one of them has a more impressive beard. There is no doubt that Mr Ardagh's beard is bigger and bushier than Mr Feedback's, but Mr Feedback argues that his is more impressive because of his GREAT BIG handlebar moustache. (A handlebar moustache is a moustache which looks like



the handlebars of a bike, so heaven knows what they were called before bikes were invented.) Beardy Ardagh argues that a natural or 'freestyle' beard (left to do its own thing) always rates more highly than a styled beard or moustache (whipped into shape). Whoever is right or wrong, **GRUBTOWN PRINTERS & CAKE DECORATORS (ESTABLISHED 1908, PROPRIETOR MR PALTRY FEEDBACK)** didn't get to print the book. Luckily, someone else did. (Do you think they have a beard? I doubt it.)



A word from Beardy Ardagh

You may well ask, 'Who's the hero of this tale?' And my answer would be: 'How should I know? Why are you asking me?' Not every story has a hero. Who's the hero of 'Jack and the Beanstalk', for example? Surely not that idiotic boy who sold the family cow for a handful of beans and STOLE from a giant??? Sounds more like a feather-brained thief than a hero to me. (Not that you were asking.)

Young Jilly Cheeter, Grubtown's resident duck-gatherer, certainly plays her part in this **GRuBtoWN taLe**, and her friend Mango

Claptrap does too. In fact, *his* head is the head which the diamond is as big as, so that must count for something . . . But what about me? I may not be the actual hero, but it's thanks to me that you get to hear what goes on in Grubtown, so that must make me some kind of a something. Perhaps I should wear a special cape?

Come to think of it, it's probably Grubtown itself which is the hero. After all, this is a **GRuBtoWN taLe**. So enough of this nonsense, stop standing on my beard and enjoy the story. That's an order.



Grubtown



The Inhabitants of Grubtown

At the back of the book (starting on page 135), you'll find a list of some of the people who live in Grubtown, including Jilly Cheeter and Mango Claptrap but NOT Paltry Feedback, proprietor of **GRUBTOWN PRINTERS & CAKE DECORATORS (ESTABLISHED 1908)** because Beardy Ardagh has said that he won't include Mr Feedback in any list anywhere, except a list of people who **DON'T HAVE SUCH AN IMPRESSIVE BEARD AS HIS**. (In which case, Mr Paltry Feedback would appear *right at the very top*. So there.)

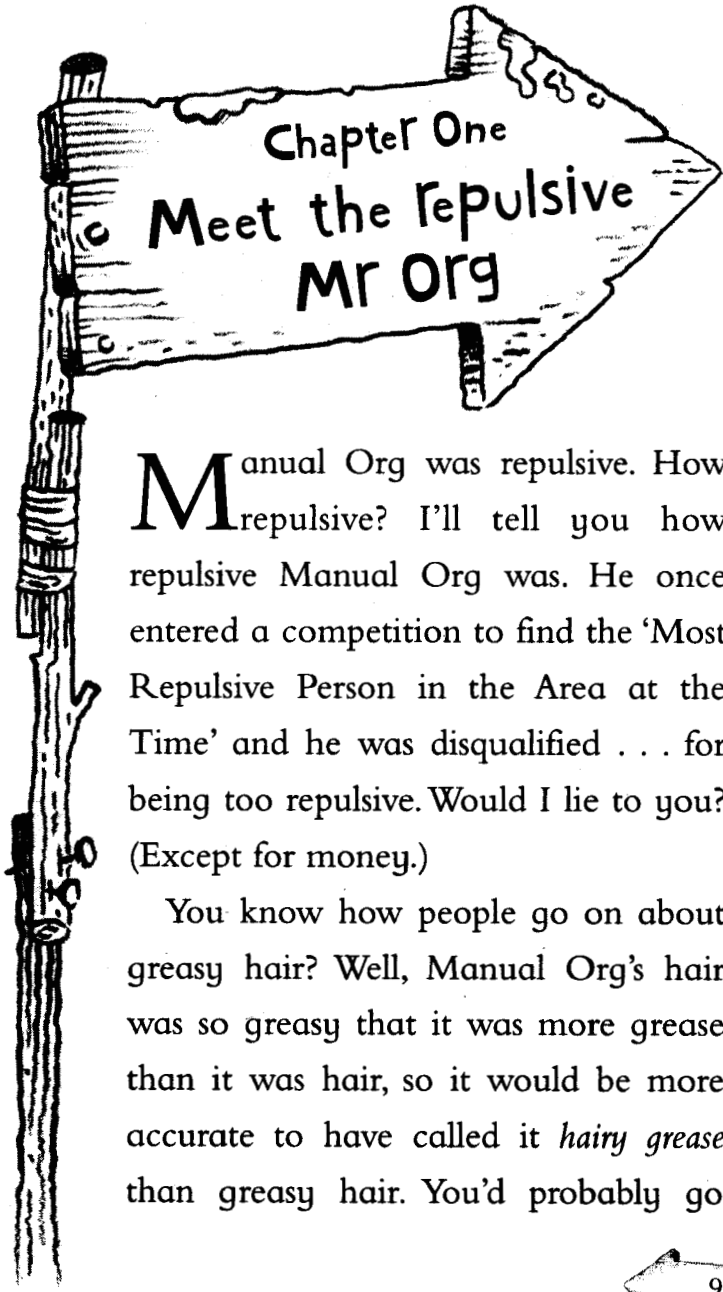


Oil

I thought I told you to get on with enjoying the story.



Grubtown



Chapter One
Meet the Repulsive Mr Org

Manual Org was repulsive. How repulsive? I'll tell you how repulsive Manual Org was. He once entered a competition to find the 'Most Repulsive Person in the Area at the Time' and he was disqualified . . . for being too repulsive. Would I lie to you? (Except for money.)

You know how people go on about greasy hair? Well, Manual Org's hair was so greasy that it was more grease than it was hair, so it would be more accurate to have called it *hairy grease* than greasy hair. You'd probably go

'**Yerch!**' and run away from him as fast as your little legs – or wheels – would carry you. It's hard to imagine anyone having such hairy grease on top of their head. And what a head.

Have you ever seen a really rotten potato? One that's been forgotten about and left to do its own thing?

You have?

What an exciting life you must lead. Do write and tell me about it.

(On second thoughts, DON'T. I don't want you to. If you do, I'll simply look at your letter, sneer at it like I do a worthless piece of cheese, then put it in a pile marked: IGNORE IT AND HOPE THAT IT MIGHT GO AWAY SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.)

Manual Org's head was like a rotten potato. It was lumpy, it was brownish yellow or yellowish brown (depending on which direction you were approaching him from)





and it was knobbly.

If it had been raining for a while, Manual Org often had little green shoots growing out of his ears. When the weather was really hot, the grease poured from his head running into the melted wax dripping from his ears and they combined to form something which looked like the evil half-brother of golden syrup. *('Stay back!')* This is the gooey liquid of nightmares. And I should know, I've had a few bad dreams about it myself.

And so to Manual Org's breath. Once, when he was in an orderly queue of people waiting for their turn to point and laugh at the village idiot, he did a burp. If this writing was to scale, it would be more of a:



I'm sorry, but there it is. Facts are facts and marmalade is stuff you spread on distant trees to keep the wasps away at picnics. His burp smelt of all the things he'd eaten that day, which included (in order of eating):

- ★ two-thirds of a pickled raw herring
- ★ a pickled onion
- ★ eleven gherkins
- ★ a fly (by mistake)
- ★ a fly (on purpose, because he liked the taste of the first one so much)
- ★ one jar of sandwich spread (one month past sell-by date)
- ★ a bag of monosodium glutamate
- ★ a packet of crisps mixed with his own toenail clippings
- ★ a boiled fox (road kill)
- ★ three peppermints (pre-sucked)

which wasn't very nice for the six people



standing downwind of him.

So let's just agree that Manual Org was repulsive. If I say much more about his repulsivosity – and, yes, I did just make that word up – you might chuck this book aside. After all, most things are more fun than thinking about Manual Org's smell and appearance, and that includes swimming in a bowl of raw liver or cleaning the underside of a garden snail. With your tongue.

I think I need a bath after all that. Just give me a few minutes.

