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Opening extract from

The Diary of a Lottery Winner's Daughter

Written by

Penelope Bush

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Diary
of a
Lottery
Winner's
Daughter

Penelope Bush trained and worked as a tapestry weaver, but always knew that one day she would write. She lives in West Sussex with her husband and son and elderly cat. She hides away in an old caravan to do her writing, where the only distraction is the occasional pheasant wandering past. Now and again, the family reclaim the caravan and it is towed down the coast to Dorset, where many happy hours are spent looking for fossils.

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'I absolutely loved this book. It's an exciting page-turner that 99% of teenage girls will love.'
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Penelope Bush

Diary of a Lottery Winner's Daughter



PICCADILLY PRESS • LONDON

For Phil and George

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Saturday 21st August

Hooray, we're going on holiday after all! Auntie Sheila has finally decided that we *can* have the caravan. Mum is not best pleased that it's such short notice.

It's not that I'm desperate to go on holiday or anything. I can think of better ways to spend a week than holed up in a tin box with my smelly (sorry, Spencer) brother and my diva (not sorry, Chelsea) of a sister. It's just that Mrs Harper, my English teacher, told us to keep a diary for one week of the summer holiday and so far NOTHING has happened that I could possibly write about.

The reason she wants us to do it is because we've been reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* and when we all groaned and said there was nothing to write about she said, 'Nonsense, Anne Frank was in hiding and stuck in three rooms for two years and she found plenty to write about.'

I cried when I read her diary. It was all that stuff about what she wanted to do in the future; when everyone who reads it knows that she doesn't get to have a future. I felt uncomfortable reading it because I couldn't help thinking that her private diary was no longer private and that it had now been read by literally millions of people. I tried to imagine how I'd feel if this diary was published and read by loads of people. Which of course it won't be, unless I die tragically.

This diary is secret, not even my best friend Lauren knows about it, so I'm definitely not sharing it with Mrs Harper or the whole of the English class. I'll write a separate diary for my homework when we're on holiday in Weston-super-Mare.

As for my own diary, I've filled eleven exercise books so far, which is funny considering nothing exciting ever happens. Anne Frank would be proud of me.

I mean, so far the highlight of my holiday has been the sleepover at Lauren's, which is hardly exciting reading, even if we did make a gory blood pact by pricking our fingers with cocktail sticks and swearing to be 'Best friends, best friends whatever, best friends forever.' My finger still hurts a bit and I can't help thinking that the whole thing was totally pointless because of course we'll be friends forever – we don't need a blood pact to prove it.

Apart from that, the only other thing I've done is help Mum out with one of her cleaning jobs. The Bings live in a

really big house and Mum cleans for them. She's not supposed to take me with her but the Bings were on holiday in the south of France.

When we got there, Mum said I could watch television. First I wandered around the house wondering what it would be like to live in a place like that. It isn't far from our own house on the Ratcliffe estate but it might as well be a million miles away.

Mum was in the kitchen doing what she calls a 'deep clean', something she always does when the owners go away on holiday. I couldn't imagine what there was to clean. The whole place looked immaculate, like something out of a magazine. There were two enormous cream leather sofas in the living room hidden under a mass of cushions. The television was more like a cinema than a television. I found the controls on the coffee table but didn't dare switch it on. What if I broke it? Mum and Dad would never be able to afford to get it fixed. I didn't want to sit on the sofa. It didn't look very comfortable and I'd mess up the arrangement of cushions.

I wondered if the Bings would like to adopt me. That way I'd get a bedroom all to myself instead of having to share with Chelsea. Charlotte Bing has quite a nice ring to it.

In the end I said I'd help with the dusting. That was before I realised just how many ornaments the Bings had. The place was stuffed with them; they were on every surface. I'm positive that if Mrs Bing had to do her own dusting she'd have taken the lot down to the charity shop years ago.

Upstairs, in the Bings' bedroom, was an enormous wardrobe. It wasn't one of those fitted ones; it was antique-looking, all glossy, dark wood with carving on the doors. One of the doors was slightly open and when I went to shut it I had a peek inside at Mrs Bing's clothes. There were all these fur coats in there.

I'm a bit ashamed of what I did next but I couldn't help myself. I'm twelve, for heaven's sake! I'm going to be in Year 8 when I go back to school next week and I really should be trying to develop a more mature attitude.

Anyhow, I'd never seen a wardrobe like this before and I had to try it, just once. I pushed my way through the fur coats, holding my breath (not because of the overpowering smell of mothballs but because I was really wishing it would work and I'd find myself in Narnia). Then I bumped my nose on the back of the wardrobe.

As I was dusting the shepherdesses on the mantelpiece I gave myself a lecture on how stupid I was to even try such a thing. The truth is though that for a moment I really believed it might work.

I've always believed in magic. When I was little I was convinced that the minute I left the room all my toys came to life. It used to take me ages arranging them so they were all comfortable and not trapped in the toy box. For ages I thought it was true because when I'd go back up to my room they'd have moved.

I'd leave my Barbie sitting on the window sill, looking out of the window so she didn't get bored when I was at school.

But when I got home she'd be sitting in the middle of the room with Spencer's old Action Man. I spent hours creeping up the stairs to the bedroom door and then flinging it open, hoping that I'd catch them moving. Eventually Spencer took pity on me and told me that it was Chelsea who was moving them about. She never let me forget it.

And then I was convinced that there were fairies living at the bottom of the garden and I used to leave bits of food out for them. And then I thought there were Borrowers living behind my dolls' house and I'd leave useful things lying around for them to find, like old matchboxes and paperclips and bits of string.

Obviously, I don't believe in that stuff any more, although I do make sure that Trevor, my bear, is always tucked up in bed before I go to school.

Maybe the Narnia thing didn't work because the fur coats were all fake.

Lauren says I shouldn't let my imagination run away with me but I can't help it. It makes life more interesting so I don't always tell her what I'm thinking any more, because now we're twelve some of it does sound a bit crazy. I think that's why I started writing a diary; because it got too much keeping it all to myself. It doesn't matter if I say what I really think in this diary because I'm the only one who's ever going to read it.

Anyway, I went with Dad to pick up the caravan because Mum said she couldn't trust herself to be nice to Auntie

Sheila after all the hassle she's caused us. And besides, she has to sort out cover for her cleaning jobs next week.

We've borrowed Auntie Sheila's and Uncle Ron's caravan every summer for the past five years. It's the only way we can afford a holiday, only this year Auntie Sheila said we couldn't have the caravan because she was going to sell it. She wants to buy an apartment in Spain instead. And now, just days before the last week of the summer holidays, the caravan hasn't been sold and so we can borrow it after all.

Mum thinks that Auntie Sheila was just being awkward because she's so up herself.

Auntie Sheila brings out the worst in Mum.

It's just as well Mum didn't come, because when Auntie Sheila found out we weren't going away until tomorrow she wouldn't let us take the caravan. She said she wasn't having it sitting outside our house overnight – 'Not on the Ratcliffe estate' – because by the morning it would either be stripped bare or have drug dealers selling out of it.

Dad didn't argue so I guess he was thinking she was probably right.

I was doubly glad Mum wasn't there because I know she would have pointed out to Auntie Sheila that the biggest drugs bust in our neighbourhood was when Mr Lowe was caught selling stuff out of his burger vans and he doesn't even live on our estate. He lives not that far from Auntie Sheila. But then Auntie Sheila would have started on about our neighbours, the Gardners, who are definitely all criminals and proud of it.

Actually they live two doors down and most of them are locked up at the moment. They're rubbish criminals. Barry Gardner, the father, tried to rob the post office. He had a fake gun and wore a crash helmet but he didn't count on Mrs Barnes being in there picking up her pension. She poked him with her umbrella and said, 'Can't you read, young man? It says no helmets to be worn in this shop. Take it off immediately.' So he did! And he'd forgotten to wear gloves, which was unfortunate because he'd got *Barry Rules* tattooed across his knuckles.

Spencer says it's better to live next door to thieves because they're never going to rob their neighbours.

We'll have to go back in the morning to pick up the caravan.

Mum and Chelsea are downstairs having a huge row. Chelsea is refusing to go on holiday with us. Mum says if she thinks we're leaving a sixteen-year-old alone in the house for a week she's got another think coming. Chelsea says she is not missing Sophie Jacobs's party because she's got a hot-tub and everything and Chelsea has just spent all her savings on a brand new bikini (white with gold beading) and a lot of bloody use that's going to be in Weston-super-Mare!

Mum told Chelsea off for swearing and told her it was a family holiday and as she was part of the family she was coming whether she wants to or not. Mum is funny. If she thinks that's swearing she ought to come and stand

in our playground for ten minutes. Her ears would curl up and drop off.

Chelsea is now sitting on the top bunk, having stormed up to our room and slammed the door. She is ignoring me and madly texting all her friends. I wish Mum hadn't insisted she comes with us. I would definitely be a lot happier if she stayed behind.



Sunday August 22nd



Just got back from picking up the caravan.

Uncle Ron is really nice. He gave me a big hug and said he thought I'd grown loads since he last saw me. This is a huge lie of course, because I'm still as small as ever. I know because I measured myself yesterday on the bedroom door and I'm the same height that I was last month and the five before that. Sometimes I panic that I'm never going to grow any more and I'll be four foot five forever. But it was nice of Uncle Ron to pretend. He's Dad's brother and I wish he'd never married Auntie Sheila. I wish he'd married someone really kind and happy like my mum.

I stuck by Dad the whole time because I didn't want to be left alone with Auntie Sheila and Pom Pom. Spencer says Pom Pom is the spawn of the devil. She's a sort of poodle but really small. Her fur is white but it's so tightly curled you