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Opening extract from

Penny Dreadful is a Complete Catastrophe

Written by

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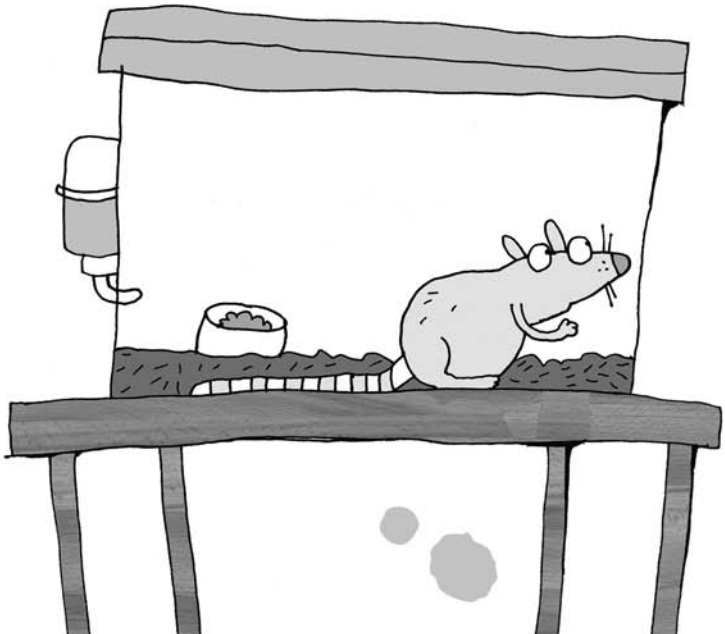
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Penny Dreadful and the Rat





My name is not actually Penny Dreadful. It is Penelope Jones.

The "Dreadful" bit is my dad's **JOKE**. I know it is a joke because every time he says it he laughs like a honking goose. But I do not see the funny side.

Plus it is not even true that I am dreadful. It is like Gran says, i.e. that I am a **MAGNET FOR DISASTER**. Mum says if Gran kept a better eye on me in the first place instead of on *Paper Doily* in the three o'clock at Aintree then I might not be quite so magnetic. But Gran says if Mum wasn't so busy answering phones for Dr. Cement, who is her boss and who has bulgy eyes like hard-boiled eggs (which is why everyone calls him Dr. Bugeye), and Dad wasn't so busy solving crises at the council, then they would be able to solve some crises at 73 Rollins Road, i.e. our house. So you see it is completely not my fault.

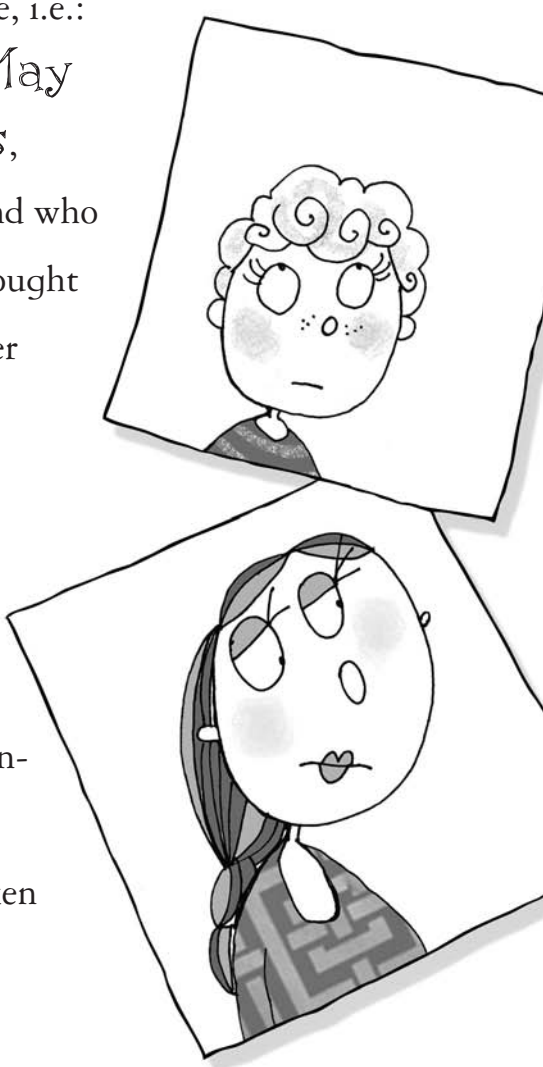


For instance, the **DISASTER** with Rooney, who is our class rat, might not have even

been such a **DISASTER** if it wasn't for several many **OTHER** people, i.e.:

1. Georgia May Morton-Jones, who is my cousin, and who should **NOT** have brought round her real leather briefcase with two compartments and a secret slot.

b. Lilya Bobylev, who is Georgia May Morton-Jones's au pair, and who should have taken an aspirin after all.





3. Cosmo Moon Webster, who is my best friend (even though he is a boy and exactly a week older than me), and who should not have made the **AMAZING MAZE**.

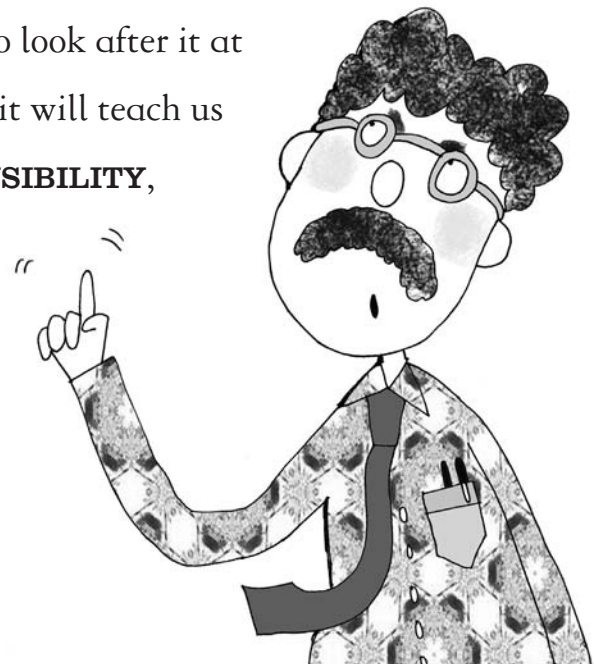
iv) Dad, who is my dad, who should not have claimed he was a **RESPONSIBLE ADULT**, because as Mum says, he is **CLEARLY NOT**.

e. Miss Patterson, who is our class teacher and very tall and thin like a beanpole, and who should have got a guinea pig after all.

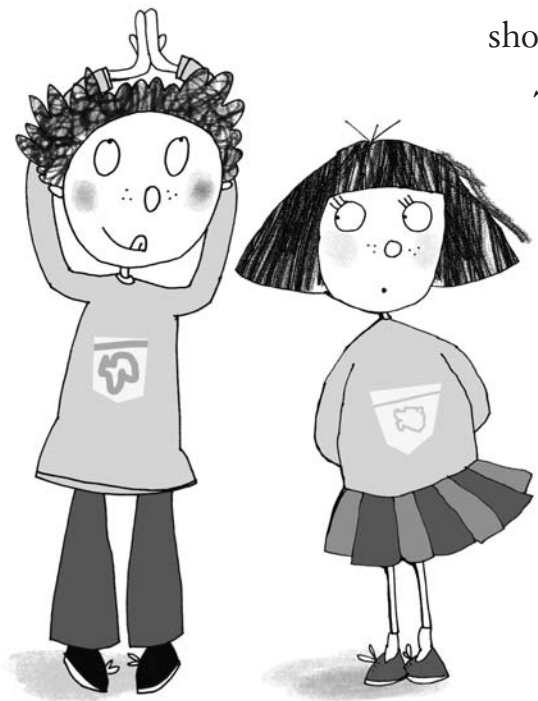
But it **WAS** a **DISASTER**, and this is why…

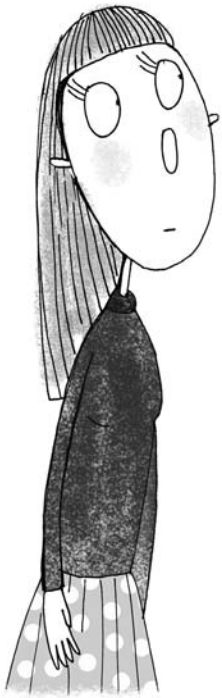


What happens is that Mr. Schumann, who is our headmaster, and who is mostly saying things like "Penelope Jones, for the umpteenth time will you please sit with your bottom on the chair and your feet on the floor and **NOT** the other way round", says something different, i.e. that our class is allowed a pet, and we will all take turns to look after it at weekends, and it will teach us about **RESPONSIBILITY**, and a guinea pig would be a good idea.



Only then Miss Patterson decides that the pet should teach us about **TOLERANCE** as well, i.e. we should get an animal that is **UNPOPULAR FOR NO GOOD REASON**. So then everyone starts to have **BRILLIANT IDEAS™** about what pet to get, e.g. Luke Bruce thinks we should get a shark and Cosmo thinks we should get a Tyrannosaurus rex. Only Miss Patterson says **a)** we cannot fit a shark into the classroom,





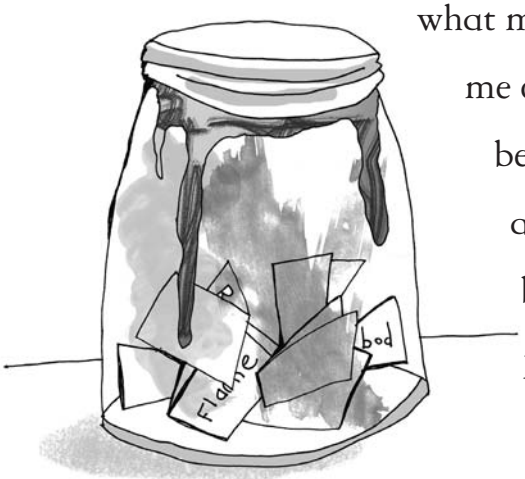
and **b)** Tyrannosauruses are **EXTINCT** and **DEAD**.





So Bridget Grimes, who is top of the class and Mr. Schumann's favourite, says we should get a rat,

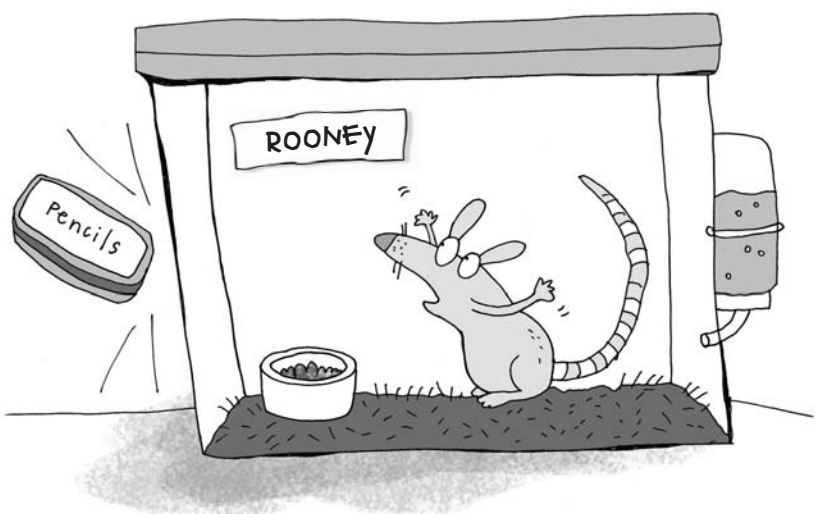
because they are actually **CLEAN** and **CLEVER** (i.e. like her) and Miss Patterson agrees and the next day there is a rat in a glass tank where the locusts used to be (which is another story entirely). And then Miss Patterson says we can each put a name in a hat (only it is not a hat, it is an old paint pot), and she will pull one out and that is what we will call him, and it has to be a boy's name because it is a boy rat, so no *Princesses* please. So I put in *Ichabod* (which is what my dad wanted to call me only Mum said no because it is too weird and also I am not a boy), and Cosmo puts in *Flame*.



Only Miss Patterson does not pull those names out she pulls out

ROONEY

which was Henry Potts's idea. So Cosmo gets cross because Henry Potts is his mortal enemy and he throws a rubber at him, and Henry throws a pencil tin back and it hits Rooney's glass tank and Rooney squeaks, and they both get sent to Mr. Schumann.





Mr. Schumann says their punishment is that they are **DISQUALIFIED** from looking after Rooney until they can learn some **RESPONSIBILITY**. Only Cosmo says Rooney is supposed to be teaching them **RESPONSIBILITY**, so if they don't look after him how can they learn it? And Henry Potts agrees (even though he is a mortal enemy), and also says Mr. Schumann is being **INTOLERANT**. Only Mr. Schumann does not agree and says



they will be disqualified for ever if they do not **PIPE DOWN**. Which they do, and they decide that Mr. Schumann is their mortal enemy for the moment and they will not throw rubbers at each other for at least an hour and a bit.





So then Miss Patterson makes the rest of us write our own names on pieces of paper and put those into the hat that is not a hat,

and she will pull one name out and that is who will get Rooney for the first weekend, and unbelievably it is **MY NAME**, i.e. Penelope Jones.

And I can tell Bridget Grimes is not pleased about this, and nor is Miss Patterson, only she says maybe the **RESPONSIBILITY** will do me good.





And I think maybe **TOLERANCE** will do her good, but I do not say it because I do not want to get sent to Mr. Schumann and be **DISQUALIFIED**.



Only when I get home on Friday with Rooney in the glass tank it is clear that Mum is not pleased either, because she says she is up to **HERE** with Barry (who is Gran's cat, and who has eaten the last of the cheese again, even though Mum has told Gran it is **CAT BISCUITS AND CAT BISCUITS ONLY**), and Daisy (who is my sister, and is very irritating, and who says she will die if she doesn't get a pony like Lucy B. Finnegan), and so the last thing she needs is more animal hoo-ha, especially with a filthy rat. So I tell her he is not filthy, he is in fact **CLEAN** and **CLEVER**,

and amazingly
Dad agrees
and he helps
me set up a
special maze for
Rooney with toilet
rolls and a cat
biscuit in the
middle, and
Rooney solves it
in thirty-three
seconds, which is
faster than Barry
(who just eats a
raisin he finds
on the floor).



And everyone agrees Rooney is a brilliant pet and **COMPLETELY CLEVER**, although Daisy says a pony would be **CLEANER** because ponies do not poo on your hand, which is true. And then I say it is time to put Rooney away because it is not just about **TOLERANCE** it is about **RESPONSIBILITY**.

