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Opening extract from

Penny Dreadful Causes a Kerfuffle

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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 *Cough Drop* in the two o'clock at Newmarket 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.



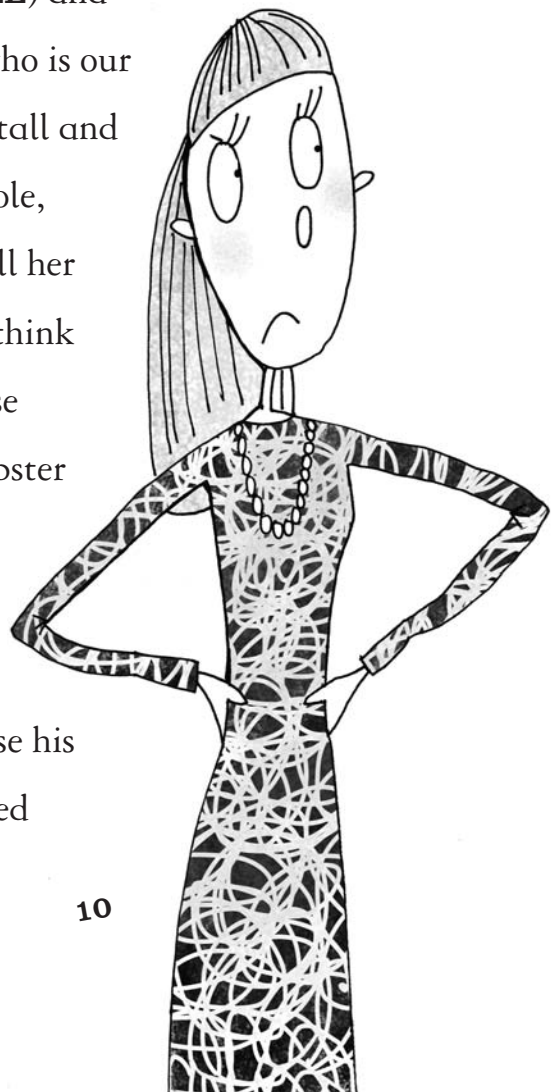
For instance it is completely not my fault that right now I am utterly blueish all over, and so

is my best friend Cosmo Moon Webster, and so is my sister Daisy's swan outfit, and so is our best tablecloth. It is probably definitely the fault of Mr. Schumann, our headmaster, who is most often saying things like "Penelope Jones, for the last time spoons are for **EATING WITH** not **BALANCING ON YOUR NOSE**". And it is especially annoying because I was **ONLY TRYING TO HELP**. So here is what happened.

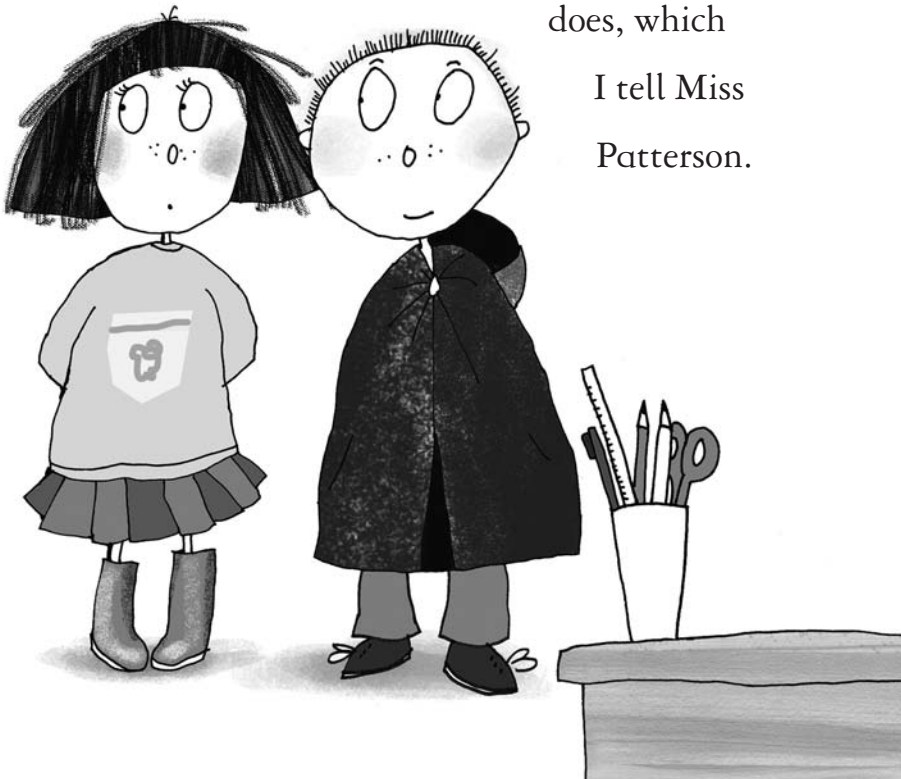


On Friday, Bridget Grimes, who is top of

the class and Mr. Schumann's favourite, is not wearing school uniform (which is red top, grey bottoms, white socks and black shoes that must be **SENSIBLE**) and Miss Patterson, who is our teacher and very tall and thin like a beanpole, does not **EVEN** tell her off. And I do not think this is fair, because Cosmo Moon Webster **DOES** get told off because he is wearing a Jedi outfit, because his mum (who is called



Sunflower, even though her real name is Barbara) believes in **FREEDOM** and **SELF-EXPRESSION**. And I get told off for wearing wellies, which is not because my mum believes in **FREEDOM** and **SELF-EXPRESSION**, it is because one of my shoes is down the drain after I was testing to see if it fitted through the gaps in the drain cover and it turns out it does, which I tell Miss Patterson.



And I also tell her that the wellies are very **SENSIBLE**, especially if it rains, but she does not agree. And Bridget Grimes, who mostly says annoying things like "*I would not do that if I were you, Penelope Jones*", says something else which is very annoying, which is:





And this is completely true, because in assembly Mr. Schumann makes Bridget Grimes stand up and show everyone her badges, and she has one for agility and one for science investigating and one for being a friend to the animals, even though I have seen her tread on a worm. Which I am trying to tell Mr. Schumann about by sticking my hand up and saying "Me, me", and also Cosmo is wanting to say something and is sticking his hand up and saying "Me, me", but it is not about Bridget, it is about Henry Potts (who is Cosmo's mortal enemy and who is poking him with a ruler).

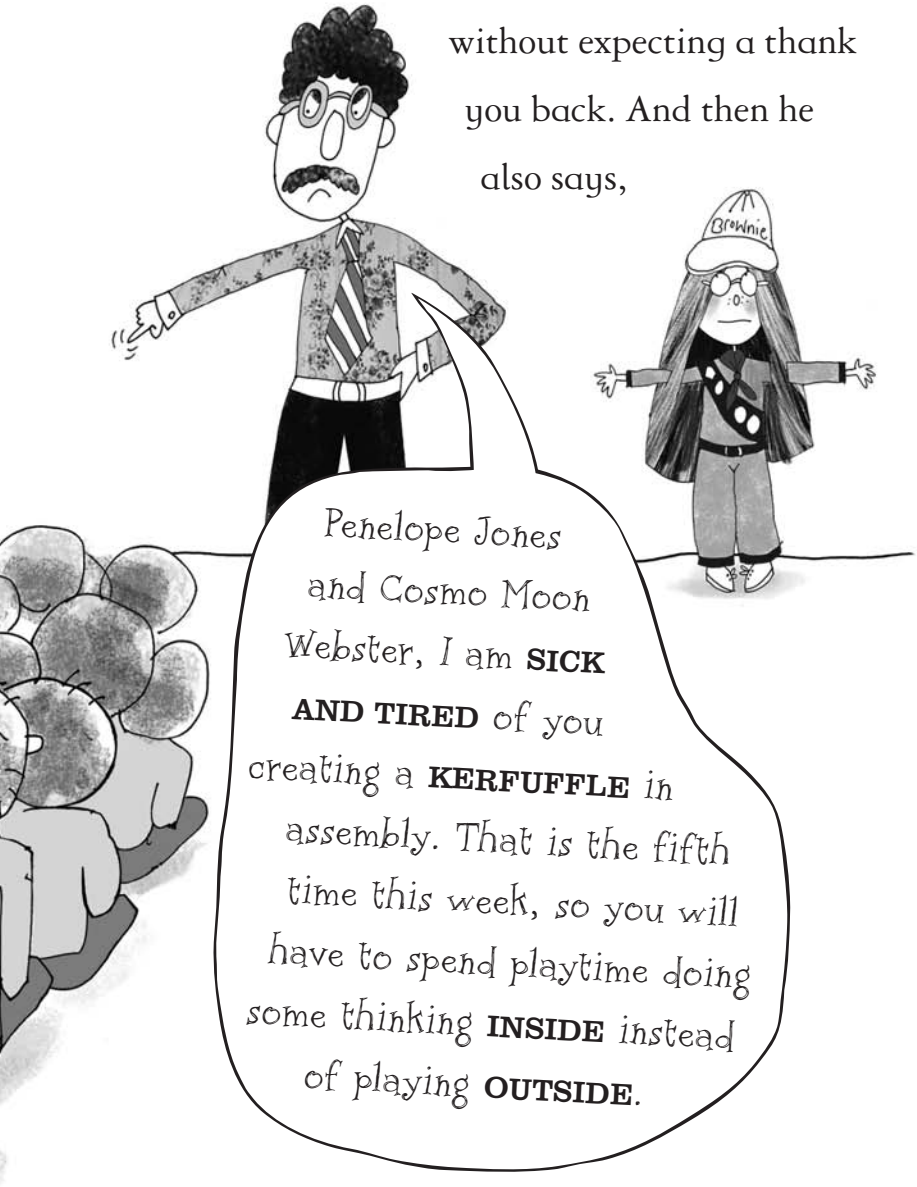




But Mr. Schumann cannot seem to see me and Cosmo even though we are not wearing capes of invisibility and Cosmo is actually wearing the Jedi outfit (which is very **VISIBLE**), because he is still talking and what he is saying is that being a **BROWNIE** is all about **DOING YOUR BEST** and **TRYING TO HELP**



without expecting a thank you back. And then he also says,

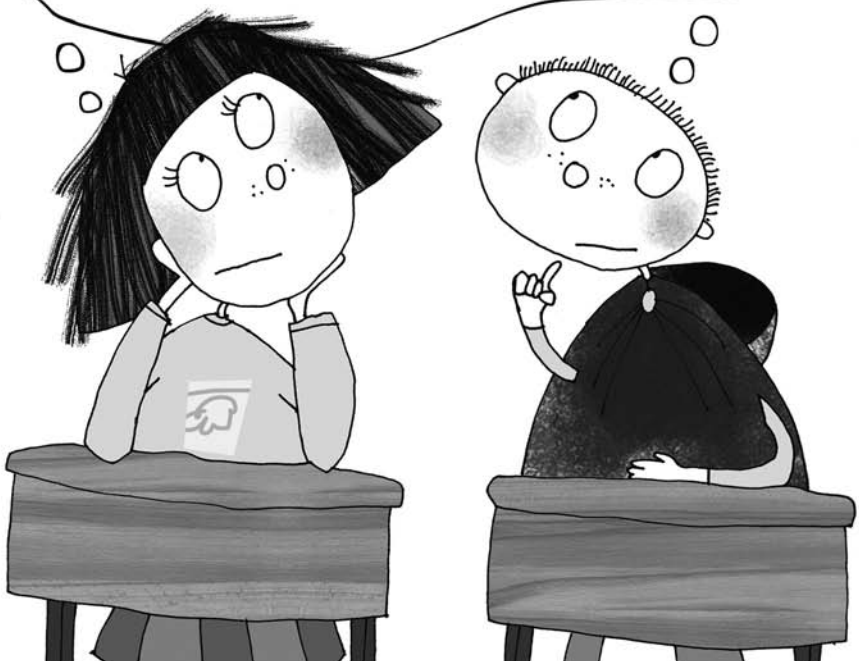


So at playtime we do our **THINKING**, which is:

1. We would rather be outside because we can see Luke Bruce on the climbing frame and he is upside down and dangling by one leg which is **AMAZING** and we think we would like to try it.

b) Are elves real?

iii) Who would win in a fight between Optimus Prime, leader of the Autobots, and a Tyrannosaurus rex?

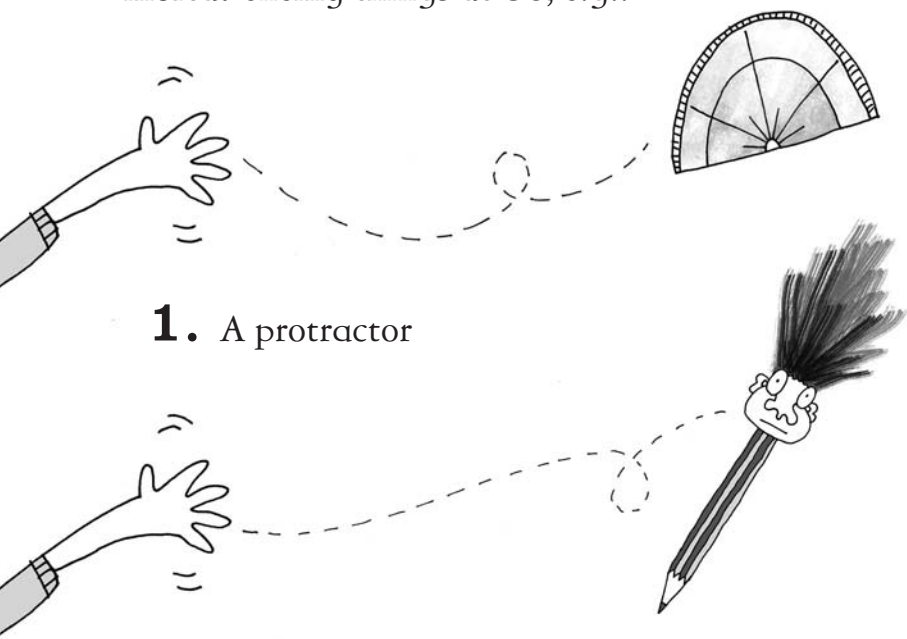


Which is when Mr. Schumann comes into the classroom and asks us what we are **THINKING**. And I say we are **THINKING** about whether Optimus Prime, leader of the Autobots, would beat a Tyrannosaurus rex in a fight if the Tyrannosaurus had rocket-powered boots on. Which Mr. Schumann says is not the sort of **THINKING** he was **THINKING** about and in fact we should be **THINKING** about what we can learn from Bridget Grimes, i.e. **DOING OUR BEST** and **TRYING TO BE HELPFUL**. Which I am not too happy about because normally I do not like learning things from Bridget Grimes, because normally it is things like "*If you carry on doing that it will get stuck*" (which it did). Only I

THINK I am actually quite keen on **DOING MY BEST** and **TRYING TO HELP**, and so does Cosmo, and so we decide we are going to be **BROWNIES**.

Only Bridget Grimes says Cosmo cannot be a Brownie because he is not a **GIRL** and that I cannot be a Brownie because I am not usually **DOING MY BEST**, I am usually doing things like throwing rubbers at Henry Potts. So Cosmo says he will get his mum to have a one-woman sit-in protest to let boys into Brownies (because she is very keen on one-woman sit-in protests). And I say I am going to stop throwing rubbers at Henry Potts, and I am going to **DO MY BEST** and **TRY TO HELP** instead, and we will both be Brownies before Bridget knows it.

And so for all the rest of the day I do not throw a rubber at Henry Potts and nor does Cosmo, even though Henry throws all sorts of mortal-enemy things at **US**, e.g.:



1. A protractor

b) A pencil with a troll on the end

3. A pot of superglue, which hits Alexander Pringle, who wears age 14 clothes even though

he is nine and who is eating a lemon tart, and a bit of tart gets stuck and he goes quite reddish and so Cosmo **TRIES TO HELP**, i.e. he hits him on the back, and the tart flies out again.



And we are utterly **PLEASED AS PUNCH**.

But some people are not pleased, e.g. Alexander

Pringle who is still hungry. And Henry Potts, who gets sent to Mr. Schumann and has to write a hundred lines saying *I will not throw things at other children*. And Bridget Grimes, who starts to cry because her hair (which is very long and actually reaches her waist and she is always swishing it and saying "My hair actually reaches my waist, Penelope Jones") has got lemon tart and also glue stuck in it and Miss Patterson has to cut a bit of it out with craft scissors.

