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Opening extract from

Penny Dreadful is a Record Breaker

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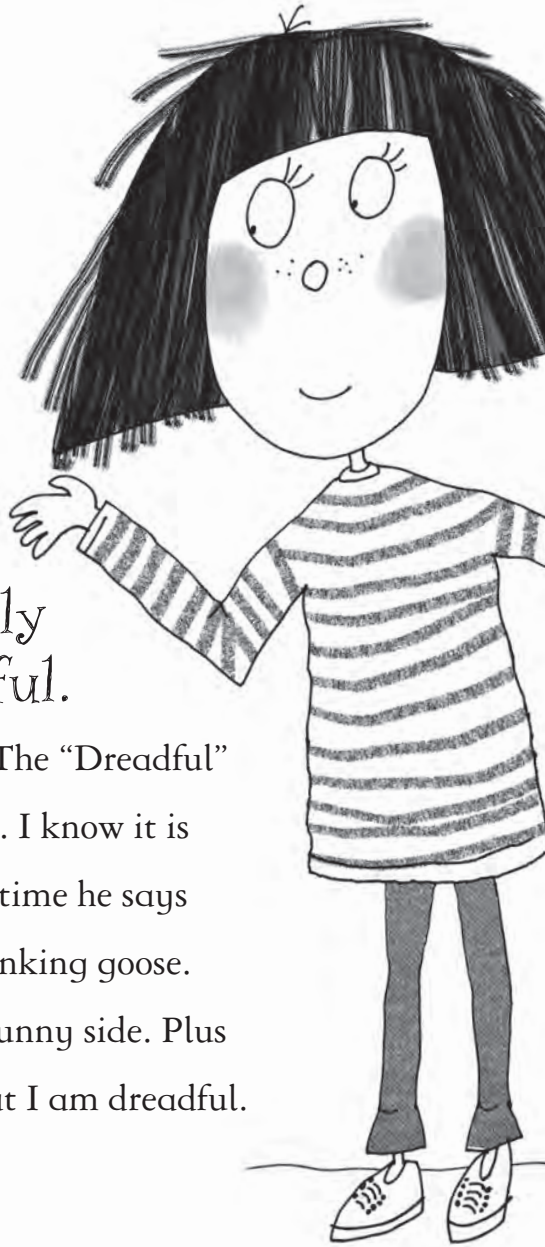


My name is not actually Penny Dreadful.

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 *Hootenanny* in the two o'clock at Towcester 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 example, it is not my fault that Mr. Bentley-Bucket is **SOAKED TO THE SKIN** and smelling of garlic. If it is anyone's fault it is, e.g.:

a) Miss Patterson's, who is our teacher, and who is tall and thin like a beanpole, for telling me to **STOP** trying to balance a pencil sharpener on my nose and to **START** thinking about how long it will take a mouse to run round a table, or I will grow up to be a complete **CLOWN**.

b) Cosmo Moon Webster's, who is my best friend, even though he is a week older than me and a boy, for saying he does not want to be a **CLOWN** when he grows up, he wants to be a **VAMPIRE HUNTER**.

3. Aunt Deedee's,

for not making it completely clear that Mr. Bentley-Bucket is not even **ONE BIT** a **VAMPIRE**.

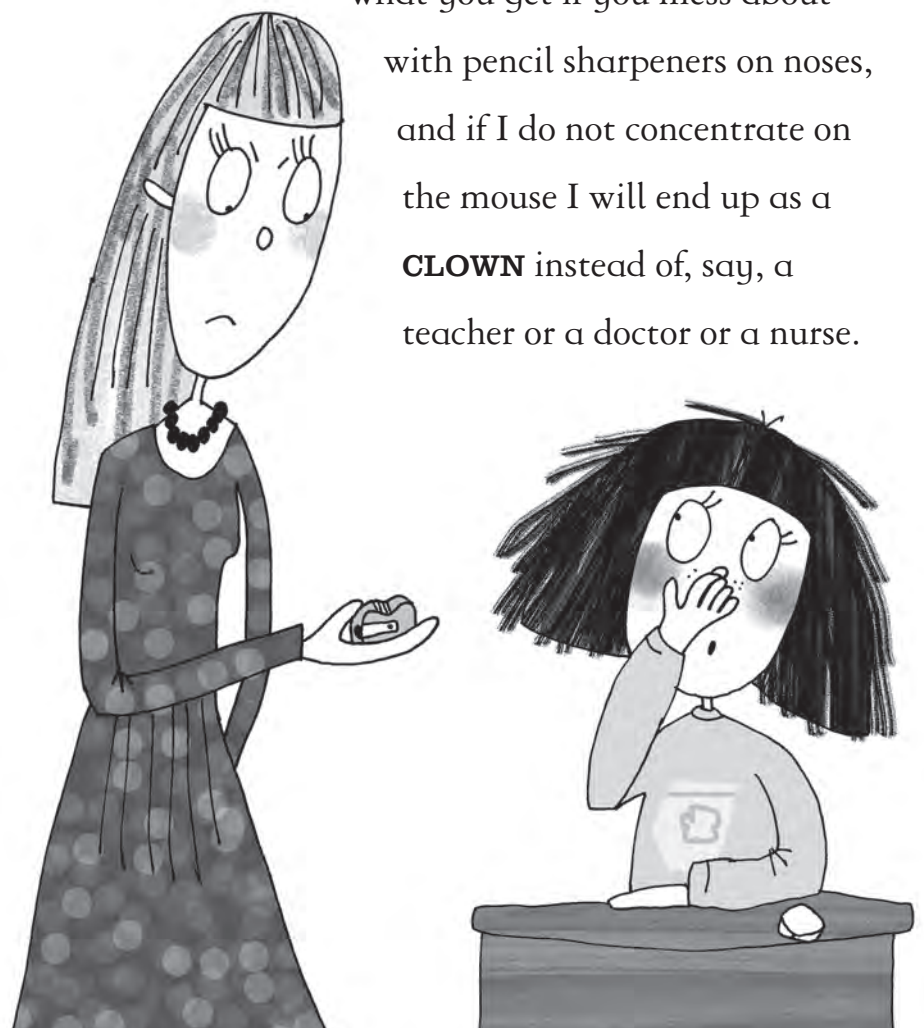
What happens is that we are in maths and we are all supposed to be concentrating on how big is a table if it takes a mouse ten seconds to run round the edge. But Henry Potts, who is Cosmo's mortal enemy, is saying a mouse should not be on a table because of the **GERMS** (because he is very keen on what has germs in and what doesn't). And Cosmo is saying Henry Potts should not be even **NEAR** a table because of **HIS** germs, which are worse then a mouse's.

And I am saying,

And Henry Potts says,

And Cosmo says,

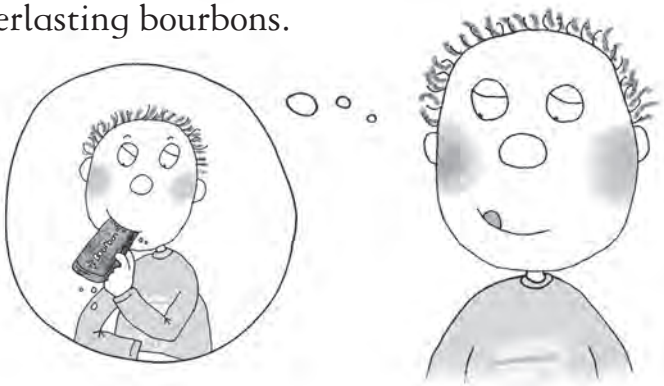
And then Henry Potts throws a rubber at Cosmo, only it hits my pencil sharpener and knocks it off my nose, which I say is a **TRAGEDY**. But Miss Patterson says it is not, it is what you get if you mess about with pencil sharpeners on noses, and if I do not concentrate on the mouse I will end up as a **CLOWN** instead of, say, a teacher or a doctor or a nurse.



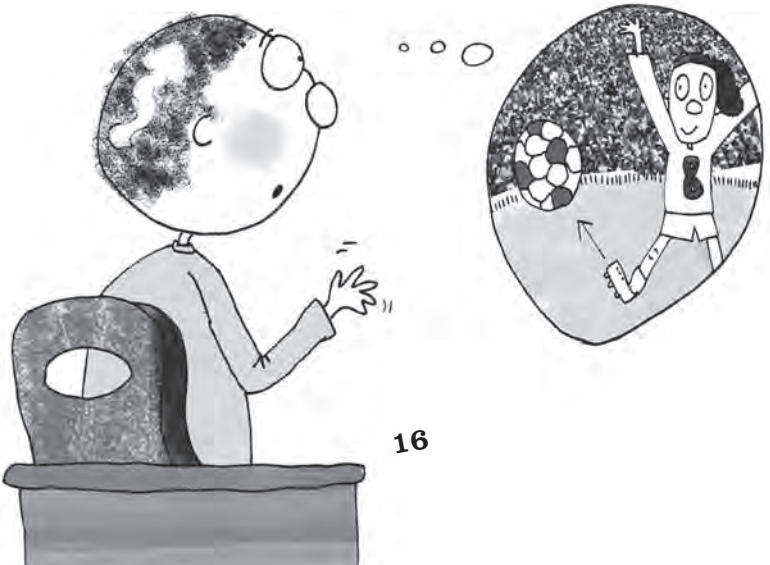
Only I say I do not want to be a **CLOWN**, *or* a teacher or a doctor or a nurse, I want to be the fastest roller skater in the whole world, because I am very keen on roller-skating fast, even though Dad says it is a **MIRACLE** I have not broken my legs, and Mum says it is only a matter of time…

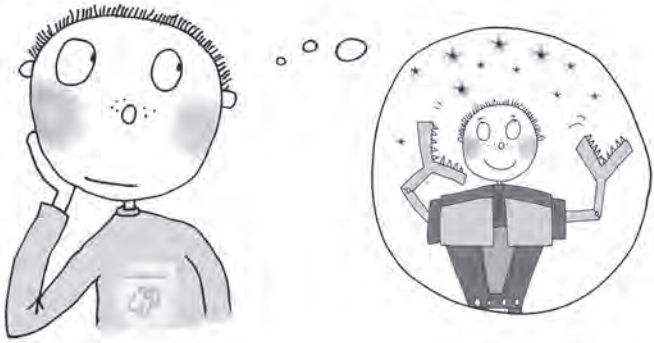
And then almost immediately everyone is going **MAD** with what they want to be when they grow up, i.e.:

a) Alexander Pringle, who wears age 14 clothes even though he is nine, says he wants to be a biscuit baron and make everlasting bourbons.

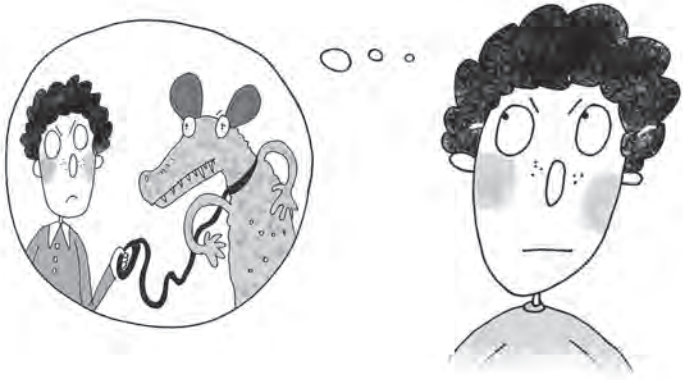


2. Brady O'Grady says he wants to be Wayne Plane, number one footballer.





iii) Cosmo Moon Webster says he wants to be Optimus Prime, leader of the Autobots.



4. Henry Potts says he wants to be an evil zookeeper who will invent a half-monkey/half-crocodile beast to rule all beasts, and to kill Optimus Prime.