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Opening extract from

The Abominators in the Wild – My Panty Wanty Woos Save the Day

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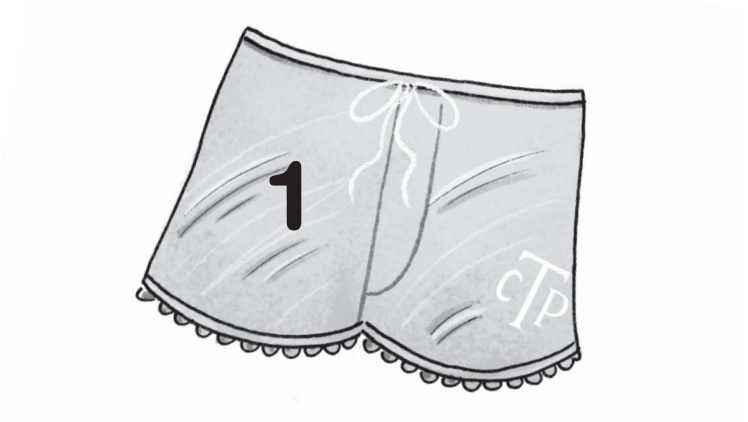


It was a slightly chilly September-ish sort of a morning. Probably because it was September. The kids of Grimely East Primary School gathered in the playground, clutching new lunchboxes and hoping nobody would notice their embarrassing start-of-a-new-school-year haircuts.

Four grubby children lurked suspiciously by the bike sheds. They looked shifty, as if

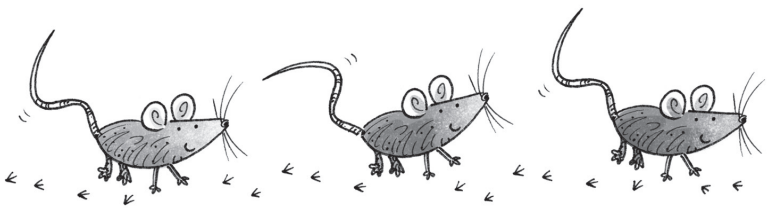


they had been up to something. In actual fact, they hadn't done anything. Yet. They were the most mischievous gang in the school, the first children the teachers suspected when anything loud, or messy, or disastrous happened. They were the Abominators.

For the first time, the Abominators had been forced to be apart over the summer holidays. Three of them had been sent away,

and the other was kept under close supervision. This was because the previous summer they had:

* Ruined Grimely's annual clog dancing festival, by releasing a hundred mice in the town square



* Switched all labels on the jams and preserves at the county show, leading to a spectacular free-for-all handbag fight between the members of the Women's Guild
* Halted production at the Grimely cheese factory for three days, with just one homemade stink bomb

* Caused confusion at the local home for the elderly, by pretending to be visitors and eating all the biscuits
* Forced the Mayor to declare a State of Emergency, when they posted leaflets through everybody's door saying that Grimely was officially at war with Peru.



It had been the best summer, *ever*. Unlike this summer, which had been boring in comparison.

"So, whad'ya do in the holidays, then?" asked Mucker, their leader.

"Me and my sister, we were sent to our granddad's farm," said Cheesy (whose pointy face, twitchy nose and round, pink ears made him

look more mouse-like than ever). "It was very quiet. Even the *sheep* were quiet. But, one night, I got up and went downstairs to fetch a glass of water. Turns out he's only got a burglar alarm! I've never heard anything so loud! Sirens. Klaxons. The lot. My granddad came rushing out with a shotgun!"

"Bet you were in loads of trouble," said Bob (the only girl in the gang, who was really called Ruby). She grinned, flicking her long pigtail over her shoulder. Without it, Bob could easily pass for a boy. She walked exactly like a boy, she talked exactly like a boy and – despite a wardrobe full of girls' clothes – she dressed exactly like a boy.

"I was in even more trouble when I let the piglets loose in the pen where he keeps his geese." Cheesy grinned. When he was away



from his strict parents, Cheesy took every chance he could to follow the Abominators Code of Conduct – to cause trouble and mayhem at every opportunity. "They made the burglar alarm sound *quiet*. Granddad was so angry, he went purple!"

"Nice one," said Mucker, approvingly.

"Dad took me to a holiday camp cos he was singing in a cabaret," said Boogster, playing it cool because he knew the others would be jealous. "One night, I swapped all the keys behind the reception desk. Nobody could get into their chalets!"

"I wish I'd seen that!" said Bob, with a laugh.

"That was nothing. On curry night, I stole all the loo paper!" Boogster grinned at the memory. "How about you, Mucker? How was your holiday?"

"Sent to our Auntie Eileen's," said Mucker,

gloomily. "We played football mostly and camped in her back garden. After the first day she wouldn't have us in her house."

"Why not?" asked Cheesy.

"We broke all her ornaments," said Mucker. "And we got tomato ketchup on her curtains. And we flooded her bathroom, so the kitchen ceiling collapsed. Oh, and we accidentally dyed her cat blue. It looked *awesome,* but she didn't think so."



"Everybody got to have fun except me," moaned Bob. "I was stuck here in Grimely. It was the worst summer ever. Mum made me go shopping, and bake cakes with sugar substitute, and do everything I hate."

The Abominators groaned in sympathy. They all knew how Bob's mother despaired of ever getting her daughter to wear pink and

enjoy baking, however much she wanted her to.

"That's well rubbish," said Cheesy, sympathetically.

"Not only that," said Bob, "but I kept bumping into . . . oh, watch out – here he comes now!"

A skinny boy of their age, his clean blond hair combed in a centre parting, was running towards them across the playground. His arms were open wide as if he was about to hug them



all, his eyes shone with joy, and he had the biggest grin on his face you could imagine.

As he came closer he started shouting: "MY FRIENDS! I've missed you SO MUCH! At last we're together again! I am AS HAPPY AS A CLAM!"

"Bob," hissed Boogster, "why *did* you tell him he could be an associate member of the gang?"

"I have *no* idea," said Bob, staring at the excited figure approaching them.

*



Cecil Trumpington-Potts was delighted to be going back to Grimely East Primary School after the summer holidays.

He had really missed his new friends.

At the end of last term he had been made an associate member of the Abominators gang – but then the summer holidays had arrived, and he had not seen them for six whole weeks.

They had all been away except Bob, and every time he had seen her, she had been with her mum and had rushed off in the opposite direction saying she had something important to do.

So Cecil had spent a quiet summer with his father, going to the Job Centre (Cecil's father, Lord Trumpington-Potts, was *still* unemployed) and the library, and to Grimely's famous Bucket Museum (famous for its collection of modern and antique buckets from around the world),

where they'd ended up volunteering, just for something to do.

Cecil had become quite expert at polishing buckets, while his dad had put his great knowledge of the history of buckets to good use and acted as a guide for visitors.

Cecil's teacher, Miss Jeffries, who also volunteered at the museum, had praised Cecil's dad handsomely. On one occasion, after



Miss Jeffries commented on his bucket-related expertise, Lord Trumpington-Potts had been so pleased and flustered, he had polished the next three buckets with his beard (which was the longest in England) instead of his duster.

"If only I had a *real* job," Lord Trumpington-Potts had said wistfully to Cecil, "then all of our problems would be solved."

Money had been tight since Lord Trumpington-Potts had lost the family fortune and they had had to leave Trumpington Manor. But while his father was finding life in the real world difficult, Cecil had never been happier.

He had been so excited the night before the beginning of term he could hardly sleep. "I can hardly sleep!" Cecil had told his father a hundred times. "Tomorrow, I'm seeing my friends! I'm so happy I could *explode*!"

*

In another part of Grimely, someone else had struggled to go to sleep: the head teacher of Grimely East Primary, Mr Nutter.

"Tomorrow, I've got to go back and be a headmaster again," he had thought to himself, as he lay awake.

"Never mind, dear," his wife Ima had said in her sleep, as if she could read his mind.

Cecil reached the Abominators and – to their relief – instead of hugging them, he just jumped up and down waving his arms.

"I can't BELIEVE it's school again at LAST!" he cried. "I'm *so pleased* to see you that if I was a doggie I'd be wagging my little tail! I'm so excited, I could make a wee-wee!"

Cecil had been brought up by a very old-fashioned nanny called Mabel Drudge, who had only ever spoken to him in baby talk, so he

thought that it was perfectly ordinary to talk this way. Despite the gang trying to teach him to talk normally, he still slipped into it without thinking.

"*Chill,* Cecil," said Mucker. He reached up, trying to give Cecil a high five. But Cecil misunderstood and grabbed Mucker's hand,



twirling so they were dancing like two mad ballerinas.

The others laughed as Mucker shook off Cecil indignantly.

"We've got Mr Coleman as our new teacher for Year 6," said Bob. "He's not as soft as Miss Jeffries."

"Certainly not," Cecil agreed. "His skin looks much rougher. I don't think he uses moisturiser."

"Not his *skin*, you idiot." Boogster shook his head. "We mean that he won't let us get away with stuff like she did. He'll give more detentions."

"Oh, goodie!" Cecil jumped up and down, clapping his hands together like a three year old. "I *love* detentions! More time with my friendy-wendies!"

"Please don't call us your friendy-wendies,

Cecil," pleaded Cheesy. "It isn't . . . *normal*. If you're in the gang, you've got to be cool."

"Everyone keeps telling me to chill and to be cool," said Cecil, puzzled, "but I'm already chilling my botty off!" While the rest of the children were in trousers, Cecil was still in his school summer shorts.

"Cecil," said Mucker wearily, "you may have read the complete works of Shakespeare, and you may be able to speak five languages . . . but you've got *a lot* to learn!"