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Opening extract from

Penny Dreadful is Incredibly Contagious

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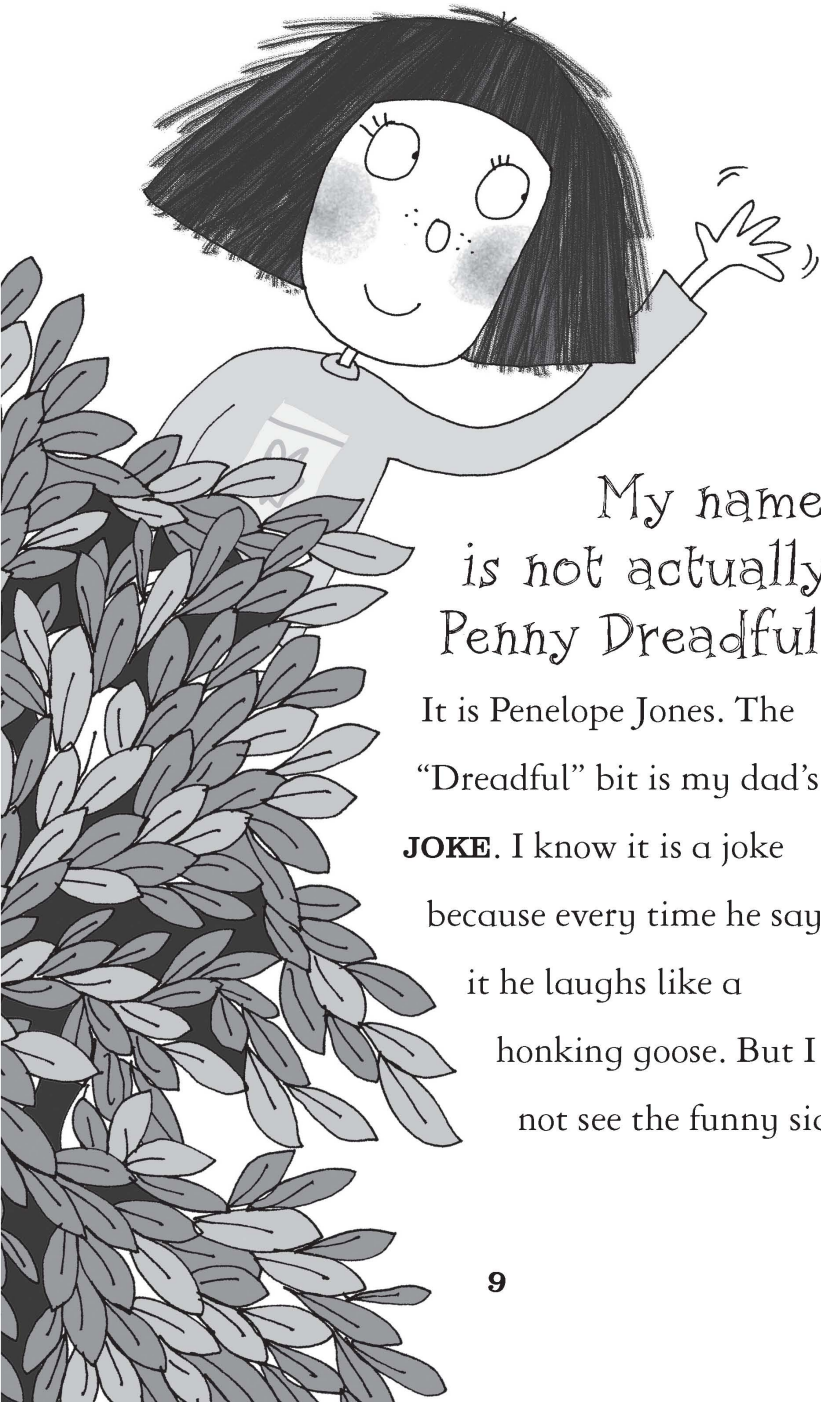
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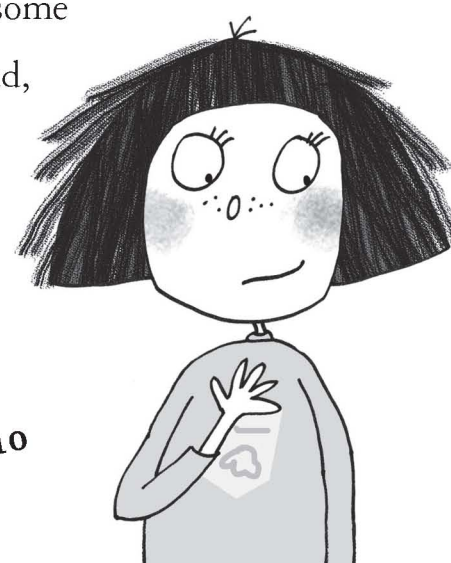
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My name is not actually Penny Dreadful.

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 *Rumbaba* in the two o'clock at Epsom 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 not my fault that Bridget Grimes is in **BIG TROUBLE** for toppling the model of the Leaning Tower of Pisa made entirely out of playing cards. It is because we are **VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCE** (which means everything else that is happening in the world around you) and the **CIRCUMSTANCES** are:

a) A wasp

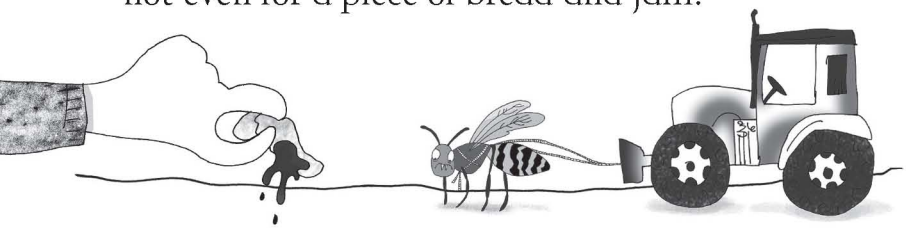
2. A factory that makes fish fingers

c) Miss Patterson's **GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY**

What happens is that I am on the corner of Newton Street trying to persuade a worm to climb on a pigeon feather (only the worm is not **KEEN** on the feather, he would rather climb on some mud), and also waiting for Cosmo Moon Webster (who is my best friend even though he is a week older and a boy) when his mum (who is called Sunflower, even though her real name is Barbara) comes out of her house completely quickly and **ALL OF A FLUSTER**. She says there has been an **ACCIDENT** and also an **INJURY** because Cosmo has been stung on the ear by a **WASP**,



because the wasp was not **KEEN** on wearing a harness so it could pull a plastic tractor, not even for a piece of bread and jam.



And now Cosmo's ear is swollen and he cannot hear and so he is not coming to school, he is staying in his kitchen making a badge from some raffia and four pipe cleaners and **LOVE**, because Sunflower is very keen on things made with **LOVE**, and also natural fibres.





And almost immediately I am completely **GLOOMY** because I will have to sit all on my **OWN** at school, which means no whispering about stuff, e.g.:

1. What is better: chocolate or aliens?

2. Who would win in a fight between a monkey with a light sabre and a crocodile with a sore foot?

c) Who can get a pencil to sit on their nose for the longest time?