

Henry Potty  
and the  
Deathly Paper  
Shortage

An Unauthorized Harry Potter Parody

VALERIE ESTELLE FRANKEL

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Henry Potty and the Deathly Paper Shortage:

An Unauthorized Harry Potter Parody

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# Introduction

Author's Note: This book is SUITABLE FOR ALL AGES. Some more so than others.

Supplementary Note: Nonetheless, this parody may be offensive to the following groups: Pirates, parrots, pirates' parrots, lawyers, vampires, ghosts, ghastrs, guests, red-shirted security guards, adolescents, adolescuncles, children, adults, fundamentalists, Spanish Inquisitors, Polish Mafia stooges, minions, vegetarians, humanitarians, new-agers, old-agers, elves, fantasy writers, professors, orcs, puppets, battle droids, frogs, lice, hail, darkness, corpses, and engineers.

Supplementary Supplement:

Within the novel lurk similar weighty issues to those in Harry Potter, including death, birth, rebirth, war, violence, sexual orientation, politics, social commentary, and cafeteria food. If you prefer to experience these issues only on TV, in computer games, in the news, and at school, rather than in books, you should not read further, or even handle this book without adequate protection.

Supplement to the Supplementary Supplement:

In fact, some of the puns are known to be venomous and strike out if they've missed feeding time.

PS: This stand-alone novel, book seven, is the sequel to *Henry Potty and the Pet Rock*. Some might think that after book one would come book two, and then three, and so on in some logical fashion. Those people lack imagination. This author, on the other hand, has a chorus of singing potatoes to guide her. Shall we?

# Chapter 1:

## THE DIMNESS IS RISING

Vast drifts of white peacock poop dotted Lord Revolting's Funhouse of Terror and Magical Thrill Ride: "Come one, come all, tour the haunted house and get well and truly scared," boasted the blinking neon sign. Under it, a small tag read, "Two thousand and one evil deeds done." High on the hill towered the rotting gothic mansion Lord Revolting had renovated into a rotting administration hub, freak show, and lost children center. The off-duty minions were currently in the basement playing foosball and trying to rig the pinball machines. Below, in the dungeon, captured wandmakers were having their spirits broken by constant brutal exposure to taped reruns of daytime TV. Those who resisted were shown the shopping channel. Up above, Lord Revolting was having his Chief Lackeys to dinner.

"You, you, and you." Voice grating like a sack of muddy gravel, Revolting gestured to three elves. "Slice yourselves open so the good bits fall on my plate."

As the elves hastened to comply, Lord Revolting leaned back in his creaky chair. Festooned with heaps of garbage over a shiny layer of green makeup, he still smelled like the hind end of a diseased orangutan. He began stroking his large white cat, which turned instantly brown from his unwashed hands. "Well, Legions of Dimness? What have you accomplished lately?" He scrutinized them as they cowered around the dining table. So many of his evil minions had been killed in previous

books that he'd widened his recruitment pool to halfwits, significantly naughty malcontents, and even movie stars. Miffie Muffet, school bully with adorable brown ringlets and button nose. Wormsnail, so named for his diet. The Phantom of the Cesspit. Dracula. The Mummy. The Blob. Mr. Hide. The Wicked Witch of the West. Sniffly Snort, inscrutable as always. And last, the dreaded Tooth Fairy, fangs bared. Only two of these were the same person.

Dracula leaned forward, smacking bloodless lips. "My plan to incapacitate the Ministry of Muckups is nearly complete! One more week of serving them decaf and they'll be too sluggish to resist us."

"And the rest of you?"

"I convinced the Polish Mafia to give us all their knickerbocker sausages at a third off!"

"I used this golden compass to chip a hole in the ozone layer!"

"I sent out twelve thousand junk emails."

"I kicked a man in the shins and stole his lunch money."

"I got Dorothy...and her little dog, too!"

Mr. Hide, a tiny hairy urban cannibal, gibbered incoherently from under the table. No one had ever caught more than a glimpse of him as he scampered from cover to cover, occasionally strangling anything smaller than he was, which wasn't much.

The greenish and gooeey Blob slurped as if sucking the last bit of milkshake up a straw. No one asked for details.

Only one man (or woman or nauseating thing) at the table remained silent, as he had no need to speak. Oh, he could speak, and quite well; he'd even been a cooking professor before a tiny indiscretion of first-degree murder had hastened his retirement. However, his deeds could speak for themselves.

Lord Revolting favored him with a very cold, very thin, very oily smile. (He had left his thin, oily dentures in the freezer overnight). "Well, Professor Snort. In the time you've been working for this organization, I see you've maximized potential scream capacity, underwritten our expenses in iron

maidens and thumbscrews, reduced the number of idiots working for me, and disposed neatly of their bodies. At this rate, you may be CEO someday soon.” His eyes narrowed. “Too soon. Why don’t you take my pet, Slimy, for a walk? And a little massage, if his poisonous secretions aren’t flowing freely.”

Professor Snort blew his nose, taking his time with the honking and gentlemanly sniff. He tossed the soaked handkerchief to some elves, who scrambled for it greedily. “You forget, Your Great Rottenness, I already did so.” He snapped off a pair of heavy-strength industrial gloves, half-dissolved with poisoned worm secretions. “Perhaps you’re the one who needs exercise. A brief stroll along that picturesque bridge overlooking the shark tank might coax a healthy green glow into your cheeks.”

Lord Revolting’s eyes narrowed. “Isn’t that bridge hanging by a thread?”

Professor Snort was saved having to answer as a messenger ran into the room. “Henry Potty’s escaping!”

Lord Revolting drew his wand and shot the messenger, killing him instantly. “How? Where?” he demanded.

“He seems at a loss for words,” Snort commented neutrally. “Not to mention, his head. However, as I’ve already told you, a perfect source has spent seventeen years protecting Henry Potty, only to turn traitor now at the last minute. He says the boy should be on his way to the park now if we want to show up and grind him into duck food.

“Well, that would certainly make the ducks happy, wouldn’t it?” Revolting mused. “All right. You’ve only tried to kill me once today, so let me get my coat.”

The doorbell rang. “Trick or Treat!”

“Get lost!” Revolting shouted. “Can’t you see I’m consulting my Legions of Dimness?”

Snort raised a finger. “Effluous One, I must protest.”

“You like Trick or Treators? Then *you* can run to the market.”



especially since the exterminators were on strike. “Stop boring me!”

“You could ignore me,” Bumbling Bore said reasonably. A tall, bearded, nightgowned old man, he could stun people with a single phrase: Class, open your books.

“I just keep hoping you’ll say something useful,” Henry complained. “All you ever say is ‘Seek the pieces of his soul.’ I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“It’s very simple. The evil Lord Revolting has divided his soul into seven Plot Devices. He turned the Gizzarding World into a morass of evil and despair. The Ministry of Muckups responded in a savage, fearless campaign by changing our name back to the Wizarding World, still in a morass of evil and despair, by the way. And you, the Chosen One, are doomed to defeat him before he destroys you. Clear?”

Henry rolled over and hauled the covers over his head. “I’ll find them after lunch.”

Bumbling Bore sat on Henry’s desk chair and sank right through it, so that his knees were bumping his nose. “I come back from the realm of death and the only person I can speak to is you.”

“As my manager, you’re under a seven year contract,” Henry said. “I’m not breaking that just because you’re dead.”

“And now that I am, you don’t listen to a word.”

“Well, I only fall asleep when you start to lecture,” Henry complained. “And by the way, I’m not impressed. Since I’ve been a movie star, kids have fallen in love with tons of other novels. What about me?” He gazed around at his room. Once bursting with homemade memorabilia, from endorsed soda cans to toothpick holders, it now held items of a more mature nature: acne medicine, *Getting a Girlfriend for Lamebrains*, t-shirts that audaciously displayed his lack of muscles, and a certificate proving he was legally, although probably not functionally, an adult. On the cusp of his seventeenth birthday (not to mention Lord Revolting’s destruction of the Wizarding World) Henry had tabled his plans to release Henry Potty exclusive chewing gum (tastes just like him!) and was

concentrating on survival and the bare essentials, rather than merchandising. Even the Henry Potty toilet paper project had been scrapped: After seven books, paper was scarce.

In the corner heaped books he'd borrowed from far-too-trusting teens and never bothered to return, or even read: *The Book of Grammar*, *Arthur Spoltsinger's Field Guide to the Fields Around You*, *Abluerat*, *The Everlasting Story*. The last one had sounded too much like his own life. His pet flying pig, Hortense, flapped aimlessly around the room and straight through Bumbling Bore, who started and growled under his breath.

"You're still ignoring me, aren't you? Hey, Henry, you want a real shocker? I'm gay. I'm GAY!!!!"

"Congratulations," Henry said, dangling treats for Hortense. "That white ghostly look was getting tiring."

"Gay, not gray! I am Bumbling Bore the Gay and I've been teaching wizarding teens for centuries!"

"Really? Just centuries?"

"I'm younger than I look," Bumbling Bore muttered. "But doesn't that concern you? Don't you want to argue about that a lot on chatrooms or buy a thousand copies of my autobiography, *The Life and Times of a Total Windbag Who Happens to be Gay and Isn't Just Saying that for Cheap Publicity*? I've come out of the broom closet. Aren't you intrigued?"

"Not exactly," Henry said. "Although the housedresses you wore make a little more sense now. I thought you just let your mother pick them out."

"They aren't housedresses," Bumbling Bore thundered. He seemed to grow ten feet in height and his knees were magically no longer bumping his nose. "They are state-of-the-art wizard bathrobes, a tradition that has reigned for centuries. It is said: do not mess with a wizard's dress sense, for after thousands of years of bathrobes, we won't listen when you say we look silly!"

"That's been said?"

"Everywhere. Now why aren't you dressed yet?"

Henry draped an arm over his eyes. “You just said sloppy bathrobes count.”

“Not for a wedding.”

“Really Wimpy’s to Horrendous Gangrene?”

“Of course. And you’re the best man. Or best something anyway. Now get dressed. I’ll be downstairs, telling off your aunt and uncle for the seventh time.”



After Bumbling Bore had knocked Henry’s closest relatives into a stupor, the pair left the house. Henry eyed his vacuum cleaner where it leaned against the shed. Someone had traced “Please wash me” with a fingertip. “Is it safe to travel? I mean with the doom and despair and vicious name changing and so forth?”

“Relax,” Bumbling Bore said. “You won’t die this early in the book.”

“Well, that’s true,” Henry said, brightening.

“Besides, it’s not as if I’d deliberately betray your plans to Revolting himself, just to keep my double agent in work. Even in this huge recession we’re having. I mean, that would be unforgivable, not to mention stupid, betraying the Chosen One just for a few dollars—which I haven’t received by the way.”

“Pounds.”

Bumbling Bore blinked.

“We’re in England, so it’s pounds, not dollars.”

“Of course, of course. Quite right. Well, off you go.”

“Wait, you babysat me all summer and now you’re staying behind? Bumbling Bore, you’re responsible for my education.”

Bumbling Bore’s eyes narrowed. “Is that a statement or an accusation?” He shrugged. “Well, I’ve prepared you as well as someone with my limited capabilities can. And I don’t think you’ll need me for the next, say, hour or two.”

“How ‘bout the rest of my life?”

“Yes, that’s what I said. Now, off you go.”

So Henry flew off blissfully into the sun.



A few minutes later, on the other other side of the wizarding world...

Henry alighted by the duck pond. His vacuum had mysteriously run out of gas, and duck guano would substitute well in a pinch. Just then, a dark shadow sprang from the bushes. A lighter shadow unrolled beside it.

Henry clapped both hands to his cheeks and screamed. "Ahhhhhhhh! It's Dracula and the Mummy."

He spun. The Phantom was flicking his fingers menacingly from behind a tree. "A weird neurotic guy in a cape and top hat!" The Blob squelched out, and Henry's eyes widened. "And...last night's dinner?"

A magical shot rang out from behind the grassy knoll. Blasted from a green grease-painted hand, it headed unerringly for Henry's head, preparing to turn it into a bowl of mint custard. Far away, the AUTHOR'S fingers spasmed on the keyboard. She'd made Revolting too powerful! And if Henry ended this early, so would the book.

*Just then, a miracle happened. Henry ducked, and as he did, his wand shuddered and fired of its own volition in the knoll's direction.* A blast shook the air, coupled with an acidic sizzle. "That's impossible," Henry murmured. If he'd listened, he might have discerned the faint garbage-scented cry of "My batteries! No!" Oblivious, however, Henry aimed his wand carefully at the Blob. "Expelli-arms!"

Nothing happened.

In desperation, Henry shot the same spell at the Phantom, who screamed as his arms fell off at the shoulders and tumbled uselessly to the ground.

Abandoning his ineffective vacuum, Henry ran. Behind him he heard the sharp squeals of the Tooth Fairy, bent on her prey. Twin scents of ozone and burned teeth hovered ever closer. The horror movie henchmen flung ancient bandages and sharp spells, and the grass only provided cover for his precious toes. Thud! Henry tumbled against a familiar figure.

“Ahhhhhh! The Dogman!” He clapped his hands to his cheeks, even though it hadn’t helped him the last time. “Aaaargh!”

“Quiet, I’m on your side.”

Henry stared at the Dogman, last of his father’s dearest friends who hadn’t betrayed him or been killed in some horrible way. Having encountered a weirdwolf years before, the Dogman was mostly shaggy canine, just as furry and about as intelligent. “Oh. Good. Brought me a birthday present?”

“Yes, but there’s no time for that now! We’re in great danger!”

“Yeah, I know.” Henry ducked as a frayed bandage came far too close. The monsters had left their protective cover and were sneaking (in one case, squelching) closer.

“If we’re not back for dinner, my wife will have me declawed!”

Henry clutched his fur coat, only to realize he wasn’t wearing one. “Dogman, every scary monster from the last hundred years of cinema is chasing me. I need your help!”

“Got it.” He turned to face the monsters. “Hey, uglies. Know who this is?”

“Oh yes.” The Tooth Fairy cackled in triumph. “Now leave him to us.”

“This is *Henry Potty*,” the Dogman said. “He’s expected at the movie premiere next week. If he doesn’t show up…”

The Mummy reached under its bandages to scratch its head. The Blob chewed its squelchy lips.

“Ve vant the boy,” Dracula said, but it lacked heart. Mostly because his hadn’t beat for centuries.

“But you also want a remake of *Dracula II*. And *Son of the Curse of Dracula*. And *Dracula Bites It*. If Henry doesn’t show up, and teens lose faith in the movie industry, we’ve all had it!”

The Tooth Fairy hesitated. She didn’t have a movie, but she had dreams. “Fine, we’ll pick him up after the premiere. But I want tickets. Good ones.”

“You’ll get them,” the Dogman promised as he fetched the vacuum and led Henry away. “Right after my big break,” he muttered. “Legions of Dimness indeed.”

“Expeli-arms!” Henry shouted at the Blob, for good measure. Again, nothing happened.

The Dogman sighed. “Sheesh, Henry, it’s like you don’t know any other spells.”

“I don’t. Haven’t you noticed how much I cut class? Now, c’mon. I’m supposed to be the best man, and I’ll bet there’s still cake.”

The Dogman’s tail wagged. “I’ll poof us there.” He snapped his furry fingers, and they vanished in a fluffy cloud of coconut-scented smoke and cheap stage effects. As they catapulted through the air toward the wedding, neither recalled the sabotaged vacuum or the mysterious figure behind the grassy knoll.



On whichever side of the wizarding world we were at in the first place...

“Blast, foiled again!” Revolting flung his wand onto the desk, groaning at the clunk of fried batteries. “I hate not getting what I want! Dim Lackeys, recruit some more dim minions! And tell my ghoulfriend I can’t pick up pizza and a video, but if she wants to be helpful she could iron my tux, the one with two custard stains and the unsightly greenish blob on the elbow.” He smashed his fist down on the table, flinging silverware in all directions. “We have a wedding to crash!”

Chapter 2:

MY BIG FAT  
NONDENOMINATIONAL  
WEDDING

The wedding hall was spectacular, from golden streamers and balloons to golden globes, gold stars, golden eagles, and Olympic gold medals. Henry rushed through all the decorated rooms to find the bride waiting outside the chapel. Horrendous Gangrene was beaming (though it would be hard not to, with all that reflected light). Otherwise, she looked the same as ever, from bushy hair to tiny knapsack (with her wand tucked neatly inside). She'd dabbed Eau de Pencil Shavings, her favorite, behind each ear. Fussing over her were her in-laws-to-be, the Wimpys, and their only daughter, Skinny Ann Wimpy. Skinny and Henry were dating, occasionally each other.

Mrs. Wimpy was arranging Horrendous's veil. "It's so nice that you're marrying my son," she cooed. "He so needs someone to take care of him."

"Definitely," Mr. Wimpy said. "It's so selfless of you to give up your dreams of a career and button him into his little onesie each night. Oh, and mop up his accidents."

Horrendous's smile grew brittle.

Ignoring his girlfriend, Henry rushed into Horrendous's arms. "Wow, you're getting married while we're all under death threats. That's so grown-up!"

“Thanks.” She held him close in a jumble of too many elbows and then drew back, eying Henry’s mismatched socks and tennis shoes. “I guess girls really do mature faster.”

“Ahem!” Skinny, already in a slinky dress, crossed her arms in a way that tightened her gown still further. “Weren’t you, like, coming in disguise?”

Henry stared at her interesting neckline until Horrendous punched him in the kidney. “I am! I used disguise-o potion to grow a mustache!”

Skinny eyed him. “So that’s what that smudge is.”

“Hey!”

“Sweetie, you’ve *so* gotta be more careful! There’s a price on your head.” Skinny reached up and pulled the price tag off his hood.

“Gosh, Skinny, it’s been so long! I wish I could ask you on a real date, instead of just a picnic where I make you pack all the food, but I’m going off to battle Lord Revolting.” Henry made his eyes as big as possible. “I may not...survive it.” He felt an urge to sing something soulful and tragic. Or given his voice, maybe just tragic.

“Oh, Henry!” Skinny stepped closer. “I wanna give you something, like, totally magical. Something to remind you, when you meet alien babes and beautiful wood nymphs, that I’m sitting at home by the fire, waiting for you.”

“Cool!” Henry puckered up.

Skinny snapped a magical binder clip on his lips.

“Mph?!”

“If you kiss another girl it’ll sever your tongue.” Skinny smiled sweetly. “Hurry back, baby.”

“Henry, you should let Horrendous and Really honeymoon instead of dragging them on your silly quest,” Mrs. Wimpy said. “Why not stay here where it’s safe and marry Skinny?”

Henry yanked off the binder clip. Under Skinny’s stern gaze, he shoved it into his pocket. “The entire fate of the wizarding world depends on my going!”

“Oh, well, if getting killed is so much more important to you than staying here with your girlfriend, there’s not much I

can do.” Mrs. Wimpy’s voice dripped with an expert’s touch of guilt. “I’ve only brought you up over the years, along with your relatives and godparents and mentors and pets.” She glanced at Henry’s companion. “Oh, Dogman, your wife is waiting inside. She says if you don’t bring her some ice water, she’s foretelling a very unhappy future for you, involving a carton of eggs, you, and a twelve-pound mallet.” Mrs. Wimpy wagged her finger. “Banshees can predict the future, you know. I’d watch myself.”

The Dogman closed his eyes and howled. “She would pick today to start wailing on me.”

Skinny shook her head. “Women.”

“Well, then. I think everything’s set,” Mrs. Wimpy said. “The stuffed tomatoes are sizzling, steaks are teriyaki-ing, Mariachi band’s set up, Chinese lanterns are lit, the escargot is within its expiration date, and only two elves have fallen into the custard pies.”

“Ever heard of a theme?” Horrendous muttered.

Mrs. Wimpy pretended to ignore her. “And Higgle will be here for the reception. There was some excuse, but I couldn’t quite make it out.” Higgle, a brown puffball of a person, was honorary professor of Animal Care and Champion Mumbler at Chickenfeet. “Have you been checked for fleas?” she asked the Dogman.

At his nod, she checked off her list. “Oh, one guest hasn’t arrived. Horrendous, did Professor Snort send back his response card?”

“Are you serious?”

“Well, dear, someone in this book should be.”

Horrendous cleared her throat delicately. “There’s a lot of evidence Professor Snort is a bad guy. He pushed Bumbling Bore down the stairs. He tried to kill Henry. He works for Revolting. He killed the curator at the Louvre. He cut down all the beautiful trees to build his Fortress of Doom. He tied Little Nell to the train tracks.” Mrs. Wimpy raised her eyebrows. “No, he didn’t send his response card.”

“Bumbling Bore trusted him absolutely and that’s good enough for me,” the Dogman said.

“Thank you, dear.” Mrs. Wimpy’s eyes narrowed. “Let’s all go in. My son’s been waiting by the altar for quite a while, while we make sure everything’s perfect.” She smoothed a bow, then fluffed it, then smoothed it, then fluffed it. This is obligatory at weddings. “Horrendous, wait here while I signal the band. Then it’s up the aisle and off to the happiest moment of your life. Better than the rest will be, anyway.”

If Horrendous’s smile had been able to detach, it would’ve fallen to the ground and shattered.



Really Wimpy had changed from a short, gangly child to a short, gangly adolescent. Over the course of six books, he’d grown pimples and bangs, with a voice that cracked when he breathed. In honor of his wedding, his mother had removed the training wheels from his racing vacuum. Now he waited expectantly by the altar, shuffling his feet and fidgeting.

Henry hurried up to him. The room was packed with whispering guests. “I’m not late, am I?”

“No later than Horrendous. She should’ve walked up the aisle two hours ago.” Really Wimpy fidgeted some more. “I’m afraid she’s getting cold feet.”

“I’ll save this wedding!” Henry pointed his wand at the back wall. Everyone in the chapel ducked, especially the ones in front.

With a single wave of his wand, Henry vanished the wall, exposing Horrendous standing half-in and half-out of the special gold stretch vacuum cleaner. A calligraphied sign on the back read, “Congratulations on Wasting your Life!”

Henry smiled. Poor Horrendous was so foolish she’d been ready to leave the chapel without getting married. “Hey, Horrendous, the altar’s up here.”

“Oh,” Horrendous said through gritted teeth, piercing Henry with a glare that could have pulverized a steel building into powder. “Thanks.” She sighed and glanced up the aisle at

Really Wimpy. He was wearing his big boy shoes without the Velcro. “Right,” she sighed. “Let’s do this.” As a dozen rented elves hummed the Wedding March in a dozen different keys, Horrendous picked up her bouquet of corrected homework assignments and entered the chapel. She truly looked lovely, all the guests agreed, from her fluffy poufy puffy dress to her gilded protractor. She floated up the aisle like a delicate, wind-tossed blossom, thanks to the helium balloons tied to the corners of her skirts. Skinny staggered behind her, lugging twenty pounds of gilded train.

“Welcome,” said the nondenominational wizarding clergyperson responsible for egalitarian civil unions. (It must be noted: some view this series and those like it as a religious allegory. Others believe it promotes devil worship. Far more know it’s definitely both. To cater to as many different tastes as possible, this wedding has been staged in a neutral location that doesn’t impose beliefs of any sort. Likewise, the witches have become, instead, new age witches, though this doesn’t stop them from baking gingerbread houses and cackling over cauldrons. Readers are encouraged to insert details for an orthodox, civil, or satanic ceremony as desired, with whichever [or wizardever] type of clergyperson they find most appropriate.)

“Dearly beloved,” he or she said. “We gather in the sight of...er...the deity or deities of one’s choice to join this which and this wizard in holy or at least municipally legalized matrimony.”

“They both look so grown up,” murmured one of the guests.

“Sunrise, sunset,” a second sobbed.

“I thought we were calling ourselves gizzards?” whispered a third.

“Changed in committee.”

“Ahem,” said the nondenominational wizarding clergyperson. “If I might have some quiet, I’m trying to proceed with this ceremony designed to offend no one, from

religious fundamentalists to religious new-agers. Now if I might continue?”

A moment’s silence appeased him or her, and he or she proceeded.

“Do you, Really Wimpy, vow to love, protect, and defend Horrendous with your life, even though we’re in the middle of a war and you both might be dead by tomorrow?”

“I wrote our own vows,” Horrendous whispered to Henry. (Readers may insert any vows they wish if these are inappropriate).

Really Wimpy quaked in his boots. He leaned forward and urgently whispered to the clergyperson.

“I see. Then do you, Really Wimpy, vow to be an equal, self-reliant partner in your marriage, and a support for Horrendous to lean on if she doesn’t require you to do anything too risky or frightening?”

Really Wimpy leaned in again and whispered more. Horrendous was twitching her hand toward her wand.

“Oh my. Are you sure you should be doing this then? Well, all right. Really Wimpy, do you at least vow to take out the trash now and then? To the best of your ability?”

“I do,” Really said proudly. It was so nice being treated as an adult. Even his pet fish didn’t do that.

“Finally. All right, then, Horrendous, do you vow to completely support and care for Really Wimpy, even though he appears to have put his shoes on the wrong feet, and never ever stop babysitting him for an instant for the rest of your natural life, so help you deity or deities of one’s choice?”

Horrendous swallowed hard, glancing from her expectant groom to his eager parents. “Um, can I have a minute?”

The clergyperson grimaced. “I’m afraid we only have the hall until eleven. And you’re delaying the caterers.”

“Right. Um. I—I—ah, um—”

The clergyperson helpfully mouthed the words “I do.”

“I—ah—”

“Excuse me, I feel I must interrupt,” a voice said from the former doorway.

“Thank God!” Horrendous said. “Or, um, deity or deities of one’s choice.”

“Another interruption!” roared the clergyperson. “The next person who says a single word will be Darned to the depths of Heck and burned in the everlasting fires of Tarnation. If you believe in that thing. Which some of us do. And some don’t. And that’s okay.” He or she glanced around and realized his or her threat wasn’t very devastating.

Mrs. Wimpy leapt to her feet. “You can’t stop the wedding! We eliminated that ‘if anyone sees a reason these two should not be married’ part.” She glanced around and realized she’d appeared a bit over-determined. “Well, it delays the kissing. Horrendous, pucker up.”

“Married?” A wizard in a six-piece suit strode up the aisle. All heads swung in his direction. The ushers shuffled their feet, clearly unclear whether to escort him out or escort him in. “Oh, I’m so sorry. No, this has nothing to do with the wedding. I should have called first, shouldn’t I? Oh dear.”

“Why are you here?” Horrendous asked, in the tone of one who will listen all day.

“I’m looking for Henry Potty.” All heads swung in Henry’s direction.

“I knew it! You so work for Revolting!” Skinny pointed her wand at him, along with everyone else in the room. (That is, everyone pointed wands. It pays to be precise, even in high-tension situations like this. Plus it draws out the suspense.)

“No! I’m an innocent lawyer!” All heads swung back in his direction. There was a pause while everyone digested this. The statement was so astonishing it was probably true. “I’m here with Professor Whata Bumbling Bore’s last will.” The wands lowered. The lawyer cleared his throat. “So, I guess now’s a bad time?” He glanced hopefully at the five-tier cake looming over the banquet table.

“Not for presents!” Henry exclaimed. “Hand it over, what’d he give me?”

“This is very inappropriate.” Horrendous glanced at Really Wimpy. He was grinning hopefully. “Take your time, Henry.”

“Well then, let’s get started.” The lawyer tugged a set of legal briefs from one pocket and legal boxers from the other. He opened the briefs and began to read:

“I, Whata Bumbling Bore, being of sound mind and body, except for the left arm which is falling off, and the mind, which is anyone’s guess, do make the following bequests:

“For Henry Can’tyouteachthatkidtousea Potty, a dozen boxes of his fan mail and a note.” The lawyer motioned to three wheelbarrow-laden men who trooped up the aisle and lowered fifteen boxes to the floor. To Mr. and Mrs. Wimpy’s delight, most of them blocked the escape route.

“Where’s that note?” Henry said. “I need some guidance!”

“Shall I read it?” the lawyer asked. “I already opened it, and it didn’t look too personal.”

“Sure.”

“Ahem. ‘Dear Henry. All these letters are cluttering my desk. Dispose of them or I’ll dispose of you. Your manager.’”

“Gee, not as helpful as it could be. Is there anything else? Money?”

The lawyer kicked him in the pants. “I’m sorry, that was in my instructions. Continuing on...”

“To Really Incredibly Wimpy, I leave this lump of gum I found under my sandal. It will prove useful beyond imagining in these dark times.”

“I’ll say,” said Really, already chomping away. “I think there’s still a little of the gum’s flavor. Or some flavor, anyhow. Kind of a wet dog bouquet.”

Henry shuddered. This from a kid willing to eat many-flavored bugs.

“To Horrendous Grungy Gangrene: some advice. Don’t marry Really Wimpy. Get out before it’s too late.”

“Hey!” said Really Wimpy, around his mouthful of dog-flavored gum.

“So useful,” Horrendous muttered. She kept glancing at Really out of the corner of her eye as he stretched out long strings of used gum and then coiled them back up on his none-too-clean finger.

“Sure it was! We found out we all have middle names.” Henry sounded them out. “I wonder what mine means.”

“There’s also a package for Horrendous,” the lawyer said. “It seems he left you a cheat guide on how to win the game. I mean, book.”

Henry stared. “Hey, *Defeating Lord Revolting for Lamebrains!* I almost picked it up as a first-year student!”

“You knew about this?” Horrendous snatched the cheat guide to her chest. “And for seven books, you’ve been, what? Planning to read it someday?”

“It’s eighty pages,” Henry muttered defensively. “Plus I figured you’d get to it eventually if you read the library cover to cover.”

“Actually, she wouldn’t have,” the lawyer commented. “It was at the far end, and this is a short series. And now that Lord Revolting’s taken over Chickenfeet Academy, he’s ordered the burning of any book that could definitely lead to his total downfall.”

“That fiend!” Henry scowled. Then he glanced at Horrendous. “Have you read it by now?”

Horrendous shook her head miserably. “The pages are blank!”

“Great!” Really said. “We don’t need to do anything!” He glanced at Henry who was still sulking over his gift. All the crates of paper looked like homework.

“No, I’m sure there’s a code,” Horrendous said. “Or a spell. I just have to work it out.”

“How about by now?” Henry asked.

“You know, you could try breaking this code yourself,” Horrendous said.

A chorus of screams burst through the church. Er, worship center.

“The fans don’t seem to like that idea,” Henry said.

“No, look!” Horrendous pointed. Really Wimpy took one glance and dived under a pew.

Pirates, battle droids, orcs, cultists, maniacs, mime artists, telemarketers, the Sicilian Mafia, and the Spanish Inquisition

were thundering up the aisle. Behind them, a few ushers started rolling the red carpet back up. “Busy day for weddings,” Henry said.

“Run, you idiot!” Horrendous screamed. “They’re all looking for you!” Clutching *Defeating Lord Revolting for Lamebrains*, she grabbed Really Wimpy by the collar and headed for the emergency exit the clergyperson had shown her before the ceremony.

Henry Potty glanced at the route to safety behind him, where his two best friends in the world had fled. Before him, past a flimsy barrier of fan mail, swarmed flunkies, goons, and henchmen from a dozen bad movies and two good ones. His choice was clear. Besides, Skinny was watching. He vaulted over the boxes and drew his wand. “I regret I have but one life to give for no particular reason! It’s clobbering time!”

Behind him, the guests snatched up anything at hand: wands, submachine guns, and the inevitable cream pies.

“Pow, pow, pow,” shouted a battle droid whose gun wasn’t working.

“Oh dear, oh dear, oh my goodness me,” moaned another, until the Blob took pity on him and engulfed him. Clearly he wasn’t suited for combat, or to be more than the sad sack of comic relief. Having finished snacking on him, the Blob stretched out an oozing tentacle and engulfed the droid’s Uzi.

An army of orcs raised arms in the air and howled loudly. Many guests covered their ears. Others preferred shielding their noses. Mrs. Barkin the Banshee screamed at all the orcs about how they were ruining such a nice wedding—what was wrong with them, did they know how long she’d spent doing her hair! And now no one was eating her spinach dip; how could the orcs manage to sleep at night. Before she was done, the orcs were all cowering under the piano, curly tails straightening in fear.

The Dogman savaged telemarketers left and right until he was distracted by a fire hydrant.

The Phantom of the Cesspit sang a long, tragic song about how he was cut off from the world of sunlight and laughter and

Mariachi bands. No one listened. “Quiet, you!” the Tooth Fairy cried. In a poof of pink gauze, she shoved him into a potted fern. The plant burped happily. No longer upstaged, the fairy zapped left and right, inflicting gingivitis wherever she flew. At last, Noodle Loudbottom managed to chase her away with a flyswatter.

Henry flung soft, vanilla-scented pies at pirates, one of whom dropped to the ground. “My eye! My eye!” he screamed. Henry didn’t see an eye anywhere, but he did see an ugly wooden marble, green with mold. He pocketed it to leave in Really Wimpy’s soup later.

“Arr!” a fellow pirate snarled at an innocent leprechaun.

“You can’t have my lucky charms!” the tiny man screamed as he vanished in a puff of cereal.

Grave robbers with grave expressions encircled the waitresses slicing the cake, demanding slices with the corner roses. One slipped and fell into the middle of the cake, to emerge spitting candles and dripping with frosting. This always happens during battles.

Above, the Wicked Witch of the West circled, cackling and shrieking and writing obscene messages with acrid red smoke, thus damaging the local environment for weeks to come.

A parapsychologist burst in. “Wizards! Elves! Telemarketers! They do exist!” He was run over by a monster truck he hadn’t believed in before that day.

Still, despite these fearsome foes, our heroes were slowly winning the day. Though the cream pies were running out, stuffed tomatoes soared to new heights that day, followed rapidly by new lows. A group of high school cheerleaders raced after Dracula and his minions. Their war cry of “You’re like, totally slain, dudes” echoed triumphantly through the hall.

Across the room, other attacks were significantly less devastating: The Polish Mafia stood around, smoking giant sausages and trying to look cool. The Spanish Inquisition, having cornered a little old lady, were pelting her furiously her with comfy cushions. Sniffly Snort had clearly elected to stay safe. Seated on a soft chair, he poured himself a glass of

champagne and nibbled on an orange-glazed canapé. Meanwhile, the cultists were busy worshipping the ceramic figures on the remains of the cake, while the Goths spied the band and ran over for autographs. Many of the bad guys, dripping with tomato sauce, began to slink away. The Mafia goons, too dignified to slink, preferred to sidle.

Higgle the Chickenfeet caretaker arrived to discover he was just in time for the party. He mistook the Blob for lime jello and ate him.

Mr. Hide hid.

“I want to suck your blood!” howled Dracula.

“I’m not your type,” Skinny yelled. She swung a teriyaki steak hard at the vampire and struck him through the heart, slaying him instantly.

A mafia guy ran to the mummy to have his boobos kissed and made better.

An entire crew of scurvy pirates raced forward, only to find that cutlasses are little use against guns and wands. Some fell back, while others fell down. Then Horrendous and Really charged into the fight, bodily picked up Henry, and carried him off.

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