Lovereading.co.uk

Cautionary Tales

Comic Verse for the 21st Century

James Lansdale

Published by Canongate Books

Extract

All text is copyright of the author

Click here to buy this book and read more

This opening extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

Contents

JOHN DE GRANVILLE GRAHAM-YOULL, who was unkind to animals and paid the consequences

JULIA, who shopped until she was dropped

NICHOLAS, who refused to tidy his bedroom and died alone

GREGORY, who listened but did not hear and was silenced forever

EVANGELINE SMITH, who paid the ultimate price for television

ANTHONY, who found relief in death alone

AMELIA, who chewed gum and lost her shoes

HARRY HOPE, who took drugs and paid the consequences

NORMAN, who became rich despite his title

ROSE, who drank too much and was once the worse for underwear

JONATHAN, who picked more than his nose

GLORIA BONE, who made the wrong call and was rendered permanently incommunicado

LORD FAVERSHAM, who kissed and lost

JAMES, who played and lost

JENNIFER, who never learned to count and thus her days were numbered

EDWARD VILLIERS, who got more of a lie-in than he bargained for

PERCY, who swore and broke the law

FREDDIE, whose curiosity got the better of him

John de Granville Graham-Youll

Who was Unkind to Animals and Paid the Consequences

There never was a Boy so Cruel
As John de Granville Graham-Youll.
He could not pass a dog without
Giving the beast a Fearful Clout.
He liked to yank on Horses' Reins
And kick their Shins and pull their Manes.
And as for cats, his Favourite Trick
Involved a Very Pointed Stick.
He tugged the Legs off Spiders and
Whatever else would come to hand.
With Limbless Slugs, his great resolve
Was watching them slowly dissolve
Beneath a Pinch of Salt, which he
Would sprinkle over liberally.

One day the lad – just for a lark

Went off to a Safari Park

In search of Creatures yet to see

How cruel a teenage boy could be,

And there it was he came across

A Very Large Rhinoceros.

But though he Poked and Kicked at it,

The Rhino didn’t care a bit.

For as we know, his Wrinkly Skin

Is very, very far from thin.

(As Mr Kipling described just so

In stories many years ago)

The Rhino, who was unaware

That Master John was even there

Decided it was Time to Sit

And crushed the boy a little bit.

And thus John keeps his Derriere

Forever in a Wheelchair.

The good news, I am glad to say

Is that John learned a lot that day

And now he fights to Save the Whale

But that is quite another tale.

Moral:

Unless you are that way inclined

Avoid approaching from behind.

Julia

Who Shopped until she was Dropped

Julia Smithson got her Kicks
From shopping hard at Harvey Nicks
And other emporia where
She bought more clothes than she could wear;
A frock, once placed against her chest,
Would almost always be purchased.

For Julia had Great Passion
For what magazines call Fashion;
She just never learned to ration
Her appetites – and, oh my dear,
It cost her, as you now shall hear.

Her father, a millionaire,

Naturally became aware

Just how much his Darling Heir

Was spending on her Underwear.

Thus impoverished, he at once

Forbad her her inheritance.

So now she is an ex-heiress

Who works weekends at M&S.

Moral:

If you Shop until you Drop

One day the Trust Fund will Stop

Nicholas

Who refused to Tidy his Bedroom and Died Alone

One thing that causes much Distress

For parents is, of course, the Mess

In which a child can leave their room.

Oh how it makes them Rage and Fume!

Now normally a child can be

Persuaded (eventually)

To Rally To and wave a Duster

So that their room can pass Muster.

But not so Nick, a Mogul's son

Who lived in Trendy Islington.

He never tidied up his room

And thus went early to his doom.

He left the place in such a state

It makes me shudder to relate.

His Bed, of course, was never made.

His clothes were everywhere displayed.

Like so many north London boys

He never put away his toys:

Discarded Teddies, bits of Bike,

Boring jig-saws he didn't like,

Remote-control cars, Model Planes,

Double-O gauge electric trains,

Unread novels, an empty box,

A bag of useless Sandstone Rocks,

Computer games whose screens were dim,

An Action Man with missing limb,

Cowboy guns, a festering sponge,

Batteries oozing Noxious Gunge.

There was within this Habitat

Not room enough to swing a cat!

Nick's parents tried to get the lad

To tidy up his Squalid Pad

But he had long taken the view

That this work was not his to do.

The room was such a mess that he

One day got lost and Missed his Tea.

Not only that, his Supper too

Which for a boy will never do.

His parents called the Police and more

Who struggled through the bedroom door

But even they got stuck amid

The mess and never found the kid.

So some days later it transpired

That the Slovenly Boy expired

Of Starvation, and not before

He'd wished he'd tidied up some more.

Moral:

Do not get lost in north London

Without a decent packed luncheon.

Gregory

Who Listened but Did Not Hear and was Silenced Forever

Gregory was a Silly Sod

Who never turned off his iPod.

All day and night his headphones hissed

As he ran through his long playlist

Of all those Ghastly Modern Bands

That no parent understands.

In consequence of this, therefore,

He never heard, one day, the roar

Of an approaching Wild Boar

Which knocked him off his feet, it’s true,

But cut down on his listening too.

For now Greg spends more time with God

Who confiscated his iPod

And said that Silence would instead

Be better for a boy who’s Dead.

Moral:

If you wish to reach old age

Download silence from Mr Cage.

Evangeline Smyth

Who paid the Ultimate Price for television

Evangeline Smyth, known as Evie,

Died young from watching Too Much TV.

A slothful girl from Enfield Locks

She spent all day before the box.

Her eyes to the screen were glued;

She rarely paused Except for Food.

All day long – there she sat.

No wonder she became So Fat.

She slouched so long inside her chair

That soon not just her eyes were square.

And it was all that she could do

To get up to go to the loo.

One day in spring it happened that

The food ran out inside her flat.

For most of us, it's no big deal

To miss out on the evening meal.

But for Ms Smith, the Shock was Great

She flew into a Grievous State

She rang for Pizza, Fish and Chips

And Curries hot that scald your lips

But everywhere she was told

"Your call is valued: can you hold?"

So thus famished, with Rumbling Tum

Ms Smyth got off her Bulging Bum

And left the flat to Forage Wide

For food enough for her inside.

But as she crossed the road, her gaze

Was captured by the vast arrays

Of TVs in the TV shop.

Thus mesmerised, she had to stop.

Her Favourite Soap! A Crucial plot!

But in her daze she failed to spot

The Fast Approaching Omnibus

Which knocked her flat and squashed her thus:

And so she joined that home so high

For Couch Potatoes in the Sky.

Moral:

The moral is, I have to say,

Always send for takeaway.