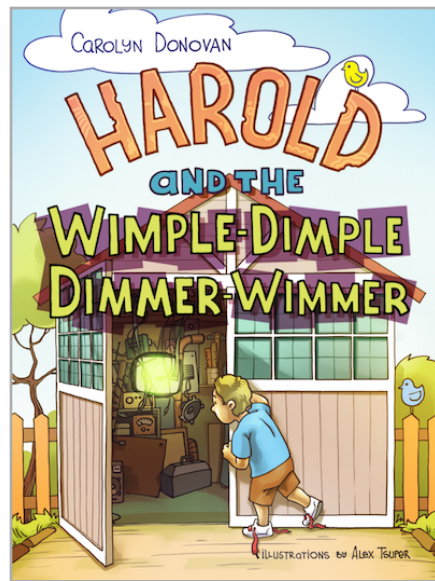


Sample Chapter

Harold and the Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer

By Carolyn Donovan



Chapter 1: Moving Day

Harold thought the Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer was an excellent piece of machinery.

He knew what it was the first time he saw it.

He thought that was weird, that he knew it was a Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer, and plus, it's a pretty weirdo name anyway.

“Hey,” Harold said, “that’s a Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer.”

“Is that a bug?” Harold’s mother asked, whirling around in alarm.

“What?” Harold asked.

“Is it a bug?” Harold’s mother repeated, crossing her arms and hunching up her shoulders the way you do when you think there might be a really big bug nearby.

“No, it’s a Wimple-Dimple...Dimmer...Wimmer,” Harold said, slowing down. Why did she think it was a bug? It was right there, *right there*, a Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer, plain as day.



“Harold, please don’t go playing in that pile of junk. You’ll get hurt,” Harold’s mother told him.

“It’s not junk, it’s a W...I will not get hurt!”

“It is junk. Just like everything else in this garage. We’ll have to clean it out before we can put the car in here.”

Harold thought, *I don’t see any junk*, but didn’t say it out loud because he knew his mother saw only junk.

Just then Harold’s father came into the garage with a box. “Oh,” he said.

“‘Oh,’ indeed,” Harold’s mother said. “We’ll have to clean everything out before we can put the car in here. Well, back to the moving truck,” she said with a sigh.

Harold’s father looked around. “Cool stuff,” was all he said.



Harold didn’t get to explore the intricacies of the Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer just at that moment because his family had, exactly two minutes before, moved into the house that the garage belonged to, and he had to bring all his boxes upstairs to his new room.

Harold liked his new room. It looked out over the backyard, and the garage where the Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer lived.

Harold thought he saw a green-y glow coming out of the garage window when he was putting his snow globe of the Empire State Building on the shelf, but he couldn’t be sure.



After the moving guys left and all the beds were in all the bedrooms and Harold chased his big sister Gina around the house with what she thought was a real lizard but was really just a good rubber one from the joke shop, Harold's mother shooed him out of the house and into the backyard.

As it was a new backyard and Harold had not met it before, he walked all the way around its edges. Then he walked right across it from one corner to the opposite corner, then did the same thing with the other two corners.

This yard was way nicer than his old yard, the one that all ten townhouses shared. This yard was his yard, and he didn't have to share it with anybody. Well, except maybe Gina. And his mother and father when they had a cookout.

He stood in the middle of the yard, spread his arms as wide as they would go, and twirled.

During a particularly whirly twirl, Harold definitely saw a flash in the garage window, and it definitely wasn't the sun reflecting in the window. He stood stock still and looked right at the window. No reflection. The flash happened again, and there was definitely nothing outside that was doing it. *It has to be the Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer*, Harold thought.

As soon as he thought that, two more flashes came through the window, like the Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer was shouting, "It is! It is me!"

Harold opened the side door to the garage and stepped inside.

This garage was a whole separate building, not just the underneath, like it was at the townhouse. Harold thought that garage was a little bit like a barn, a little bit like a garage, and a little bit like a workshop. He liked that.

The garage had two doors (well, three if you counted the side door that Harold came in through) but you didn't push them up, the way you did at the old townhouse. These garage doors were actual doors, and you had to open both of them. And these doors opened out, onto the driveway, so you couldn't just drive right up to them, like you could at the townhouse; the doors would bang into the car as soon as you tried to open them.

But even if you knew where to stop the car so you wouldn't hit the doors, you couldn't drive a car into this garage. There was too much stuff in this garage already to put a car into it, too. The stuff in the garage wasn't even their stuff,

seeing as they had only lived in the house since just before lunch. There was a lot a lot a lot of stuff in the garage, though.

There was stuff made out of wood, and stuff made out of metal. There was stuff hanging on pegs, stuff leaning against walls, stuff leaning against stuff leaning against walls. There were glass jars with screws in them, glass jars with nails in them, hanks of rope hung on spikes, an old chair with wheels on it. And rulers, a lot of rulers.

Harold sat in the chair, and realized that the seat swirled. If he swirled it one way the seat got higher and if he swirled it the other way the seat got lower. He got off the chair to make the swirl go faster. He swirled it high, then plunked himself back down on it.

He tried to wheel it over to the desk, but the floor was kind of bumpy and had random bits of things on it. He had to stand up and pull the chair along with him. When he got to the desk he sat down on it again.



There were a bunch of aluminum cans containing a bunch of pencils on the table. But the pencils in the aluminum cans weren't the eight-sided round ones like pencils are supposed to be, but rectangle ones; two wide sides and two narrow sides. Harold couldn't figure out how you'd sharpen a pencil like that.

He saw a pad of paper that had lines printed all across it and up and down it, so he took one of the rectangle pencils and started drawing stuff with it.

Three flashes reflected in the glass jars and aluminum cans. "Oh," Harold said out loud, "I forgot."

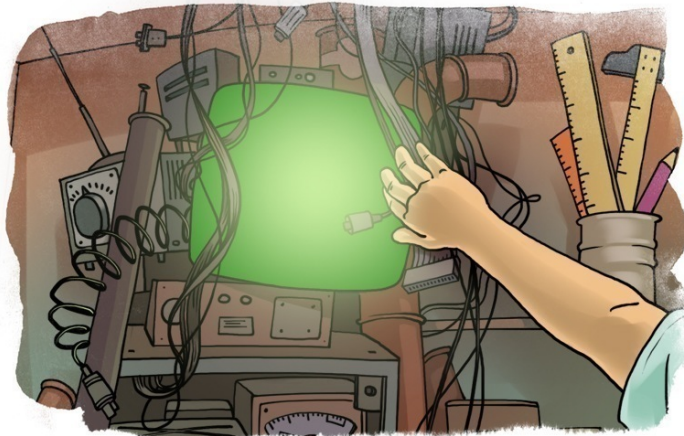
He put the pencil down, hopped off the chair, and turned around.

In the corner of the garage, if you didn't look very hard, you would see a pile of junk—twisted bits and metal pipes and coils of springs and all kinds of metal-y things. But if you stood right in front of it, and looked right at the middle of it—the top-to-bottom, side-to-side exact middle—you would see that it wasn't a bunch of separate stuff, it was one whole thing.

And in the middle of the middle, behind some wire, was a kind of screen. Not a big one, like a computer's, but a little one, about the size of the rectangle you get when you do that thing with your two thumbs and your two fingers, the thumb-to-fingertip, other-thumb-to-other-fingertip thing. Well, that's what Harold thought.

Harold pushed the wires out of the way, and they neatly and silently slid to the side, showing the screen. The screen was green, and made of glass, and a little bit curved at the edges.

And it was on.



It got a little brighter and a little darker, a little brighter and a little darker, almost like it was breathing.

Letters appeared on it.

“**H e l l o**,” it wrote.

Harold backed up, way up. He looked around for a plug, but he didn’t see one.

The Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer’s screen went blank.

Harold stretched his neck forward until he could see the screen again.

“**H e l l o**,” the screen wrote once more.

“Uh...hi,” Harold said, not sure if he was supposed to say it or think it or what.

The letters disappeared, but the screen glowed brighter and darker, brighter and darker, a little faster than before.

“Um...,” Harold said after a little while, “are you a Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer?”

“**I a m**,” wrote the machine.

“But um, what is that, exactly?”

“**I t ’ s a m e .**”

“**HAROLD!**” It was Harold’s mother. “Harold where are you?”

“I’m in the garage!” Harold shouted. But his mother couldn’t hear him, he was in the garage when he shouted it.

“**HAROLD! HAROLD!**”

Harold opened the side door and yelled, “Mom, I’m right here! I’m playing with the—”

The Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer started flashing *on-off-on-off-on-off-on-off-on-off-on-off-on-off-on-off*.

“—pencils and paper and stuff!”

“Well, come in for some cookies and milk!” she shouted through the kitchen window.

“Okay!” Harold shouted back.

Harold looked at the Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer, not knowing exactly what to do. “Will you be here tomorrow?” he finally asked.

“**I will. I live here,**” the Wimple-Dimple Dimmer-Wimmer wrote, then went dark.

Harold hopped on one foot back to the house, just because he could. He did it in nine hops, and secretly was glad it wasn’t ten, because he didn’t think he had ten hops in himself.



Gina was already sitting at the kitchen table with her milk and her two cookies. Gina liked the chocolate ones with the vanilla stuff in the middle, but Harold liked the crunchy ones with the peanut butter stuff in the middle.



Harold plunked himself into a chair, and his mother brought over his glass of milk and his two cookies. He immediately dunked one halfway into the milk, shoved it in his mouth, then took a swig of the milk to help wash it down, because it was too big a cookie to do what he did with it.

Gina twisted apart her cookie, licked off all the stuff in the middle, then nibbled around the edge, making the cookie smaller and smaller but keeping it a circle.

“How’s your room?” Gina asked.

“It’s good,” Harold said. “How’s yours?”

“Good. Daddy’s gonna put up my princess bed curtains after he puts back together the TV thing in the living room,” Gina told him.

“My snow globe of the Empire State Building didn’t break,” he offered back.

“That’s good.”

Their mom joined them for the last cookie. She had a cup of tea and her own cookie, which was...just a cookie. No smooshy stuff in the middle, no chocolate chips, just...cookie.

“How’s your room, Mom?” Gina asked, looking at their mother through the side of the glass she was drinking the milk out of.

Their mom sighed, “Well you know, I thought we’d paint it first, but honestly this move has pooped me out, so...I think if I change the curtains it will be fine,” she said, kind of to herself.

Their mom sighed again. “Well, it’s very nice, actually, Gina, thank you for asking.”

She sighed again.

“We’re gonna have pizza tonight.”

“YAY!” Gina and Harold shouted in unison.

“Yeah. This move has pooped me out,” their mother admitted, pooped-outedly.

“YAY!” Gina and Harold shouted again.

“I mean, not that you’re pooped out, Mom,” Gina said quickly, because if you took what they said one way it would be really really mean, and she didn’t want her mother to think they were being mean.

“I know what you meant,” their mom said, smiling at Gina.

Gina let out a big breath, like she was holding it and didn’t know it.

Their mom drank some tea, then looked at them very seriously. “Children, there is something you should know about your mother.”

They stopped eating. They might have stopped breathing.

“Your mother,” their mother continued, “likes pizza, too.”

Gina and Harold stared at her in complete silence. Then everybody laughed.

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