Just Plain WEIRD



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Conkers



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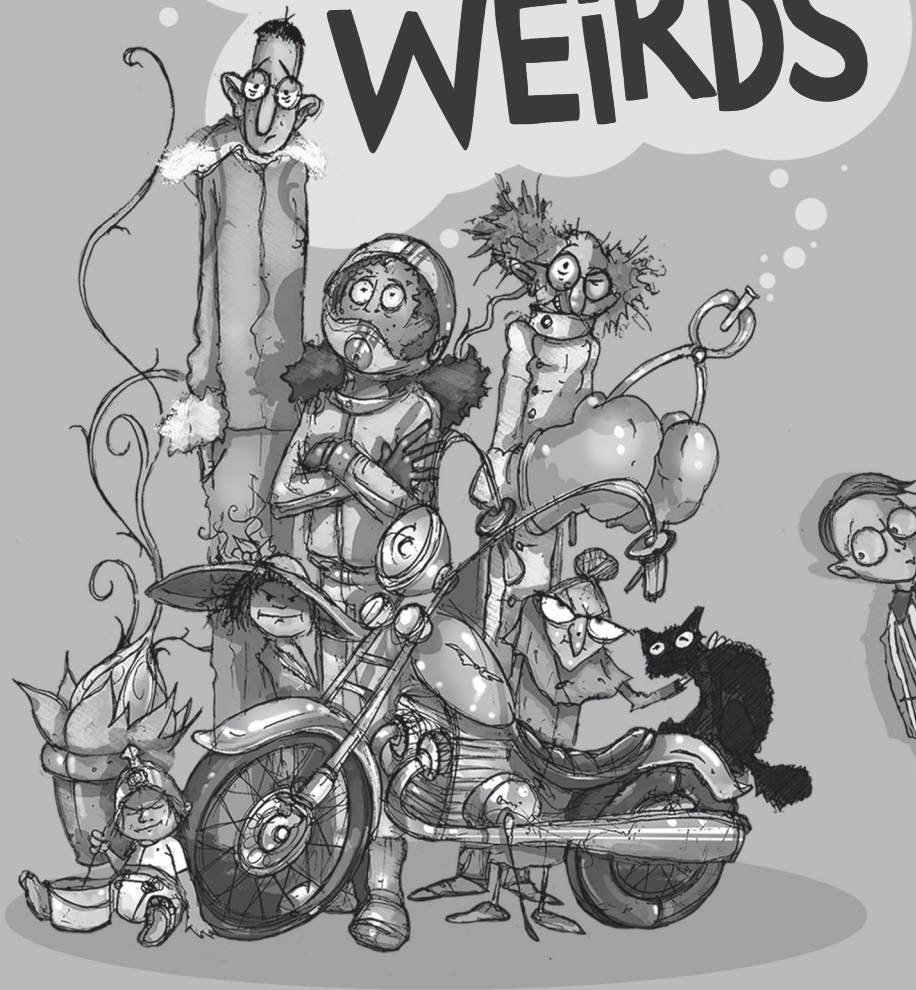
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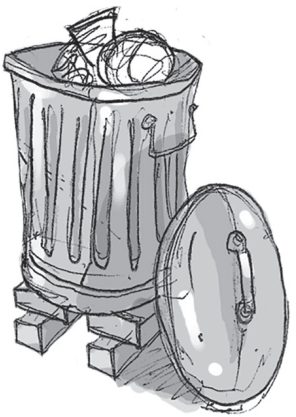
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Part 1

It's time to meet the WEiRDS





Chapter 1
THE WEIRDS ARRIVE

The day the Weirds moved in to Number 17 Tidy Street, Mrs Primm called to say hello. Well, that's why she said she came. Really, she was just being nosy.

Number 17 had been empty for a long time. Mrs Primm stood on the doorstep, shaking her head at the shocking state of the garden. It let the street down. She must have a word about that. And that awful old tree out the back, which was blocking all her light.



The new family had arrived in the night, which was odd. Mrs Primm knew they were there, though. There was an upturned shopping trolley under a bush. Bits of string and empty boxes all over the place. Smoke coming from the chimney.

Mrs Primm wanted a word about that as well. Didn't they know Tidy Street was a Smokeless Zone? No open fires allowed.

She gave the knocker a brisk rap. Flakes of old paint rained down on the buckles of her blue shoes.

There was a long pause. Then came the sound of unsteady footsteps. Then, scuffling noises. Then, heavy breathing. Slowly, the door opened. A small, dirty face looked out.

"Is your mummy in, dear?" asked Mrs Primm, peering in.

The gloomy hall was full of boxes and crates. From somewhere in the back, there came a

crashing noise and then the splintering of glass. Something big was throwing itself at a door.

The child with the small, dirty face stared at Mrs Primm and said nothing. He was standing on a packing case, wobbling a bit. He wore a fireman's helmet, hamster slippers and a droopy nappy. His nose was running.

"If you'll just get Mummy?" Mrs Primm said, and waited.

Still nothing, except the hard stare.

"What's your name, dear?" asked Mrs Primm, sweetly.

"His name's Frankly and he's not allowed to open the door," said a voice from inside. "Get down, Frankly. Or else."

This one was a girl with bird's nest hair, topped with a floppy hat trimmed with fake grapes. She wore an old net curtain and yellow wellington boots.



"Is your mother in, dear?" Mrs Primm asked. "I'm Mrs Primm from Number 15."

"She's out jumping from an aeroplane. Get *down*, Frankly," the girl said.

Frankly got down from the packing case and gave Mrs Primm another LOOK. Then he turned, hoisted up his nappy and trotted off down the hall.

"I'm sorry," said Mrs Primm. "Did you say – jumping from an aeroplane?"

"She's a stunt woman. She stands in for hopeless film stars."

"I see," Mrs Primm said, faintly. "I *see*. Er – is anyone else home?"

"Dad's in the cellar. It's more than our life's worth to go Down There." She pointed down some steep stone steps.

There was something very dark about the way she said this.

"So nobody grown up is available, then?" Mrs Primm asked.

"Well, there's Gran. She's not exactly grown up, though."

"I beg your pardon?"

"She's a little person," the girl said.

"Oh. *Oh!* I'm sorry, I didn't ..."

"It's OK, she likes being a little person. Anyway, she's making chips. It's not a good time. I could get my brother Oliver, but he's doing his homework. Why don't you try again tomorrow?"

"Thank you," said Mrs Primm. "I will. I just wanted a little chat about dustbins and Smokeless Zones and things. And perhaps your father could do something about that awful old tree at the back ...?"

But Mrs Primm was talking to the door.

She was wondering whether to slip a note

in through the letterbox when there came a big thump from the other side. The door rattled in its frame. Claws scraped the wood. There was a deep-throated snarl.

Mrs Primm hurried away down the path.