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opening extract from

Weird Street: The Treasure of Mr Tipp

written by

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For Angus with love

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The problem: My old bike. I am growing too big for it, but we can't afford a new one as Dad is off work with a broken leg.

The brainwave: Ask Mr Maini at the corner shop if he has a paper round so I can save up for some new wheels.

The dilemma: There is *a paper round, but it takes in Weir Street and I've heard that the people who live there are* weird.

The hero: Me, of course. Jonny Smith. I'm not scared – it's only a paper round. And just how weird can the people in Weir Street be…?

Chapter One



I'm an ordinary sort of boy. I live in an ordinary house, with ordinary windows and doors. I have an ordinary dog, an ordinary cat and an ordinary goldfish. My family are ordinary, too, if you don't count my little sister, Ellie, who could win Olympic medals if eating was a sport.



I like ordinary things like football, computer games and school holidays. I'm not too keen on school, though, or my teacher, Miss Dodds. She thinks my head is full of nonsense. And she doesn't believe me when I tell her about the extraordinary things that happen in Weird Street.



I don't think she's ever been there. Or, if she has, she probably just whizzes up and down the hill in her car, thinking up difficult maths problems. I bet she doesn't notice the people or the houses. But when I'm on

my paper round, I notice the people *and* the houses, especially when they're a little bit odd … like number 34 and a half.



"Don't you think that's a strange number for a house?" I asked Mr Maini one day, as he wrote it on the corner of the newspaper.

Mr Maini just shrugged. "Some people call their houses strange names, so why not strange numbers."

I didn't argue with him, but number 34 and a half is a very odd house. It stands halfway up Weird Street and looks like it's come from the pages of a storybook.

The whole thing has been dug right out of the hillside, probably by a huge bulldozer. It has an old oak door covered in iron studs, with a big, iron bell, and its windows are made from the bottoms of bottles. Strangest of all is its flat roof, where vegetables grow. Rows and rows of them.

The first time I saw the house I thought that a giant lived there. An untidy giant who kept broken fridges, and prams and washing machines in his garden.



As I dodged around the junk on my way to the front door, I half expected to find a large beanstalk spiralling up towards the clouds, or a brown hen clucking about, laying golden eggs.

No such luck. All I found was more junk. But I *didn't* find a letter box. There wasn't one on the door, so I yanked on the old bell instead.

I heard a clang, then a muffled explosion came from inside the house.

"What have I done?" I gasped.

I quickly stuck the paper into an empty old milk churn and scurried away.



"Who lives at number 34 and a half?" I asked Mr Maini when I handed back my bag. "I rang the bell and there was an explosion. Did I do something wrong?"

Mr Maini smiled. "Oh no, that would just be Mr Tipp inventing something. He's always making new things out of the rubbish people throw away."

Ah! That explained the noise *and* the junk in the garden.

"Trouble is," said Mr Maini, "sometimes

Mr Tipp blows up bits of his house … and himself, too. He lost a door and half an eyebrow last week."

"I haven't seen him yet," I said.

"You will," smiled Mr Maini, and would say no more.

Of course that made me really curious. I couldn't wait to find out more about Mr Tipp and I couldn't wait to meet him.



Then one morning I got my chance.

As I approached number 34 and a half, I saw that the old oak door was lying open. I know I should have just delivered the paper and left, but I didn't. I tiptoed inside and found myself in a large, dimly lit hall.

I peered through the gloom. YIKES! I was not alone! The hall was full of robots standing stiffly to attention. They were made entirely out of junk. Some of them had square faces, some had round, and the

light coming from the bottle-bottom windows gave them an eerie, greenish glow. I looked at them, my eyes wide. And, what was really scary, they all seemed to look rightback at me.



I gasped and was about to go when one of the robots, wearing tinfoil overalls and an old diver's helmet, suddenly moved.

"Do come in," it said in a hollow voice. "You're just what I need."