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Opening extract from

Weird Happenings

Written by

Kaye Umansky

Published by

Barrington Stoke

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Weird Happenings

by

Kaye Umansky

Illustrated by Chris Mould

To my long-suffering family

First published in 2004 in Great Britain by
Barrington Stoke Ltd
18 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7LP

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

This edition first published 2012

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ISBN: 978-1-78112-076-7

Printed in China by Leo

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Chapter 1
Trouble at Breakfast

It was Saturday morning. Pinchton Primm sat at the breakfast table, eating a bowl of sawdust and rabbit droppings.

"More healthy Bran-o-Flakes, darling? Make you grow big and strong!" asked his mother, sipping tea.

"No thank you, Mother," said Pinchton. "I'm full now."

From outside came the roaring sound of a Harley-Davidson motorbike starting up. Mrs Primm made a face and said, "I *do* wish Isa would get rid of that bike. Why can't she get a nice little family car, like normal people?"

"Oh, I don't know." Pinchton's father spoke from behind his morning paper. He sounded quite dreamy. "Takes me back, that sound. Wind in my hair. The open road."

Mr Primm was a deputy bank manager who always wore suits and didn't have much hair for the wind to get in. But just a few days ago, Mr Primm had told Pinchton that *he* had once had a motorbike, a long time ago, before he married Mrs Primm. When he got married, Mrs Primm had made him sell it.

Pinchton was still feeling shocked. It was like finding out that his father had been a member of the Moon landing team or a singer in a rock band.

"Did you hear the noises again last night? From next door?" tutted Mrs Primm. "The songs? The laughter? All the bangs and crashes? I didn't sleep a wink."

"I wonder where my old leather jacket is?" Mr Primm went on. He was still thinking about his motorbike. He saw himself speeding down the open road. He wasn't listening to Mrs Primm at all.

"I shall have to have another word with the people next door," she said. "This can't go on."

"You didn't throw it away, did you?" Mr Primm asked his wife.

"I really have no idea, Rodney. Now, Pinchton, fold your napkin if you've finished eating. Must I remind you again?"

"Sorry, Mother," said Pinchton, and folded his napkin.

"You see? That wasn't hard, was it? Now, off you go and put your best shirt on. We're going in ten minutes."

"What?" said Pinchton, startled. "Going where?"

"Oh, Pinchton!" cried Mrs Primm. "Don't say you've forgotten. Lunch! At Aunty's!"

Pinchton's heart sank. Of course. On the last Saturday of the month, they always visited his Aunty Sue and Uncle Brian who lived in a bungalow full of china and frilly curtains on the edge of a village where nothing ever happened. They had small, creepy twin daughters called Amy and May who wore matching clothes and hardly ever spoke. They *never* spoke to Pinchton.

The trip to their house was always the same. Pinchton and his parents always had to drive for hours to get there. They always



stopped at a motorway service station to get flowers and Pinchton's parents would always argue about what to buy. Then, every time, they would drive off and miss the turning to Aunty Sue's village and blame Pinchton for failing to warn them in time.

When they reached the bungalow, there was always kissing and cups of tea. Pinchton would sit on the edge of a slippery sofa, trying not to yawn while the grown-ups talked and the twins stared.

For lunch, there would be salad.

Afterwards, they would all go for a stroll around the village and admire the hanging baskets. They would visit a garden centre. Then they would go back to the bungalow and listen to the twins playing *London's Burning* on their recorders until it was time to go home.

"I'm … er … I'm afraid I can't come this time," said Pinchton. "Didn't I tell you? There's a … thing at school." He blushed and fiddled with his napkin. He wasn't good at lying.

"Thing? What *thing*?" demanded his mother sharply.

"I don't know, a jumble sale or something. I said I'd help sort the stuff," lied Pinchton.

"Do you hear that, Rodney? Pinchton's made arrangements to help at some *jumble* thing."

"I was fond of that jacket," said Mr Primm, unhelpfully.

"Why didn't you say, Pinchton?" said Mrs Primm crossly. "It's very selfish of you. Aunty Sue will have lunch ready and everything. And the girls will be *so* upset."

Pinchton thought about his spooky cousins and said nothing.

"So what time is this *jumble* thing?" went on his mother. "I suppose we could leave a little later if – "

"Ten o'clock," lied Pinchton. "I said I'd help sell, too. I'll be ages. And I've got loads of homework. It's all right, you go without me. I'll be fine."

"But what about your lunch?"

"I'll make myself a lettuce sandwich. You go. Really."

"Hmm," said Mrs Primm. "Are you listening, Rodney? What do you think?"

"What?" said Mr Primm.

"Pinchton says he'll stay on his own."

"The boy's old enough to look after himself, my dear," said Mr Primm. He sighed and folded his newspaper. "What's he going to do? Cut his foot off? Trash the place?"

"Ha, ha," laughed Pinchton, to make his dad happy. "As if, ha, ha."

"Well, all right," said his mother, grumpily. "I suppose we can leave Pinchton here. But I'm not happy with you, Pinchton. You should have told us before."

"I know. Sorry."

"Just remember your key. And double-lock the door. Use the brown seedy loaf and don't cut yourself when you're making your sandwich. Make sure you rinse the lettuce. And wash your hands well afterwards if you've been handling dirty old clothes …"

There was a lot more of the same. Pinchton nodded and said *yes* and *no* in all the right places. He promised not to eat ice cream from vans or drink dirty water or pass out in the shower. He promised to take his shoes off if he went into the lounge, because of the cream carpet. Then he helpfully offered to load the dishwasher while his parents got ready to go to Aunty Sue's.

At last, they were off. Pinchton waved goodbye at the front door as they pulled away. He waited five minutes, just in case they had forgotten something and came back.

Then he raced upstairs, changed into his football strip, and went to visit the Weirds.