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Opening extract from

Meet the Weirds

Written by

Kaye Umansky

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Meet the Weirds

by

Kaye Umansky

Illustrated by Chris Mould

To Mo and Ella

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Chapter 1
The Weirds Arrive

The day the Weirds moved in to Number 17 Tidy Street, Mrs Primm called in 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 off 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 and bits of string and empty boxes all over the place. Smoke was coming from the chimney.

Mrs Primm wanted a word about that as well. Tidy Street was a Smokeless Zone. No open fires were allowed.

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

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

"Is your mummy in, dear?" asked Mrs Primm, peering in. The dark and 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 small child just stared and said nothing. He was standing on a packing case, wobbling a bit. He wore a fireman's helmet, hamster slippers and a drooping nappy. His nose was running.

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



Mrs Primm saw a girl with bird's nest hair, topped with a floppy hat trimmed with fake grapes. She had an old, orange curtain draped round her and was wearing yellow wellingtons.

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

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

Frankly got down from the packing case and gave Mrs Primm another Look. Then he turned, pulled 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 filmstars when they're too scared to do things themselves."

"I see," said Mrs Primm, in a faint voice. "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 creepy about the way she said this.

"So is there nobody grown-up around, then?" asked Mrs Primm.

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

"I beg your pardon?"

"She's a dwarf," said the girl.

"Oh. *Oh*! I'm sorry, I didn't …"

"It's all right, she likes it. Anyway, she's frying chips. It's not a good time to speak to her. 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 fire laws and things. And perhaps your father could do something about that awful, old tree at the back …?"

But she was talking to the door.

She was wondering whether to slip a note 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.

She hurried away down the path.