

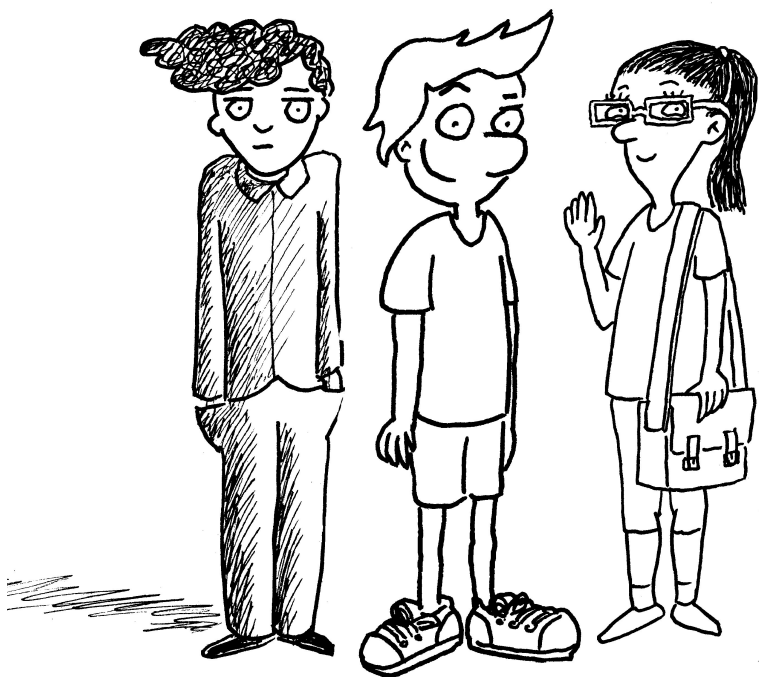
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The Capital of New Zealand

Kipp Kindle always knew his family wasn't like other families. They were weird, in fact they were probably the weirdest family on Earth. It was just as well they lived in the town of Huggabie Falls, because Huggabie Falls was the weirdest place on Earth.

Take Mrs Turgan, for example, the teacher who was also a witch. Then there was the factory that existed in another dimension, the bottomless river, the topless hill, the train tunnel

to nowhere, and the fact that every Sunday it got dark at four-thirty in the afternoon and every other day it got dark at eight—weird, weird, weird.

On top of all the usual weird things that happened in Huggabie Falls, one day an extremely weird thing happened. It was by far the weirdest thing that had ever happened anywhere. It was so weird that someone should write a book about it. In fact, somebody has, and you are reading it.

Kipp Kindle didn't read this book to find out about the extremely weird thing that happened in Huggabie Falls. He first heard about it at school.

His teacher, Mrs Turgan, was late, again. She was supposed to be teaching them mathematics that morning. Mathematics can be quite fun, but not if it's being taught to you by an actual witch. Mrs Turgan wore a black pointy hat, had a big hairy wart on the end of her crooked nose, and she had a bumper sticker on the back of her broomstick that read: Honk if you want to get



turned into a newt!

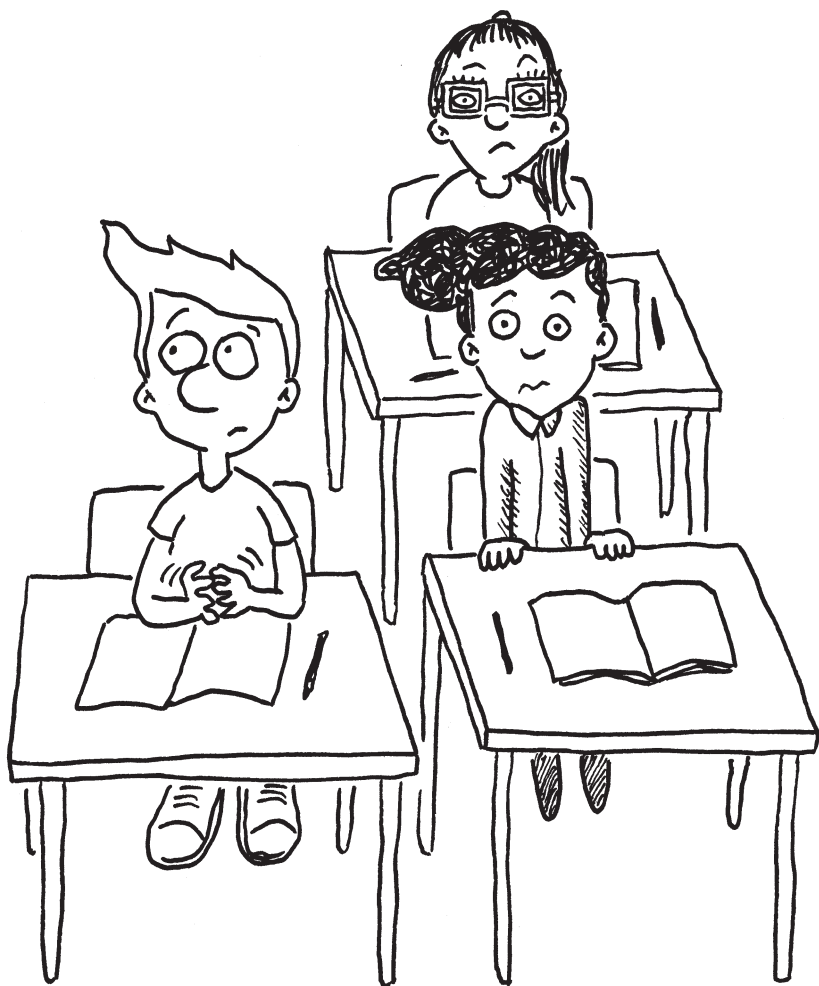
Mrs Turgan's class-room was more like a dungeon than a classroom. If you were a student in Mrs Turgan's class, which unfortunately Kipp and his two best friends, Tobias Treachery and Cymphany Chan, were, then you were often too scared to lift the lid of your

school desk. Inside you could find a thick book on geometry, but you were equally likely to encounter a deadly snake or a large, hungry tarantula.

However, on the day the extremely weird thing happened in Huggabie Falls, there was one student who waited eagerly for the mathematics lesson to start, and who happily risked being attacked by a desk-dwelling tarantula if it meant getting his hands on a tantalising geometry book. And that student was Ug Ugg. Ug Ugg loved mathematics, which wasn't that weird, except for the fact that Ug was an eleven-year-old troll, and trolls don't usually like mathematics—trolls don't usually like anything other than clubbing things. Ug didn't even own a club, but he owned fourteen calculators, much to the shame of his entire troll family.

Now, where was I? Oh, that's right, Mrs Turgan was running late.

Ug Ugg was sitting in front of Kipp, Tobias and Cymphany. He turned around and frowned.



‘I do hope Mrs Turgan isn’t away sick today.’ Ug adjusted his bowtie. ‘We’re supposed to be doing decimals. I could hardly sleep last night I was so excited.’

Kipp stared at Ug for a moment. He wondered what sort of peculiar creature got excited about decimals. He raised his eyebrows at Cymphany and Tobias.

If you saw Kipp Kindle and didn’t know he was from one of the weirdest families in all of Huggabie Falls, you would think he was just an ordinary school kid, with a cheeky, up-to-no-good grin on his face, sneakers that spent more time on desks and tables than on the ground, and hair that looked like a rolling wave surging off his forehead.

‘Let’s hope Mrs Turgan is away sick today,’ Kipp said. ‘Maybe we’ll get a nice friendly substitute teacher, who isn’t a master of the dark arts and who doesn’t have blood sucking bats for pets.’

Cymphany looked up from her book.

‘Terrible Turgan is here today,’ she said.

Cymphany Chan always wore her hair in a tight ponytail, yet somehow strands of it always managed to break free and tangle themselves around her glasses. She permanently had an expression on her face like she was eager to correct people, which of course she always was. In preparation for correcting people, she had learnt every known fact in human history. If you wanted to know what the average wingspan of a Peruvian White Striped Pelican was, then Cymphany was the person to ask.

‘I saw her,’ Cymphany continued, ‘up in the vulture’s nest before school.’

Tobias gulped.

The vulture’s nest was Kipp, Tobias and Cymphany’s nickname for Mrs Turgan’s office, because it was high up in the school’s old clock tower, where only Mrs Turgan, on her broom, could get to it.

A wide smile spread across Ug’s face. ‘She’s here. Oh, good. That’s a relief.’

‘A relief?’ Tobias Treachery said. Tobias had black hair, black clothes and even his eye colour was black. But his face was pearl white, and that was probably because he was more scared of Mrs Turgan than anyone. ‘Ug, Mrs Turgan is a maniac,’ Tobias said. ‘No one would actually want her to come to class.’

Now if Mrs Turgan had never shown up that day this would be the end of this story, after only a few pages, and no one is going to want a book they can finish reading in less than two minutes. So I am very relieved to inform you that Mrs Turgan was not sick, and that she did show up to teach Kipp, Tobias and Cymphany, and Ug one second later.

She came swooping in the doorway, her black cloak flowing behind her, and the petrified children scrambled back to their seats. She carried a big jar under her arm—a big jar containing a giant toad. And that giant toad looked rather dismayed.

Mrs Turgan slammed the jar down on

her desk. ‘This, children, is my husband,’ she announced. She said husband, as if to say the selfish man who has made my life a misery for the last twenty years. ‘Last night I cooked him his last roast dinner, and for the last time he said my cooking was ordinary. Now he is a toad, literally, which is ironic considering I’ve always thought of him as one anyway. Now, he no longer eats roast dinners—he eats only cockroaches and flies.’

Mrs Turgan glared at the class with her beady, witchy eyes. ‘And any children who have not completed their homework will soon become those very cockroaches and flies.’

To say the petrified children rushed up to the front of the class to hand in their homework would be like saying it is only slightly warm in the middle of an erupting volcano. Many children were almost seriously injured in the frantic stampede to Mrs Turgan’s desk. And those who had not completed their homework—which was certainly not Ug, or, as it happened,

Kipp, Tobias or Cymphany—slipped out of the classroom via the backdoor as quickly as they could, hoping Mrs Turgan would not spot them and see to it that they ended up in her husband's green belly.

When everyone who hadn't left sat back down, Mrs Turgan removed her black pointy witch's hat and dropped it onto her desk. It landed next to a bubbling cauldron of marinated bats' tongues, which smelled like old smelly socks that have been sprayed with old-smelly-sock odour enhancer. Mrs Turgan adjusted her robes and raised one bushy, disgusted eyebrow at the fidgeting children in front of her.

After a long pause Mrs Turgan said calmly, 'So, who knows something about the extremely weird thing that happened in Huggabie Falls?'

Now, when a normal person in a normal town talks of something weird happening, it's usually not all that weird and people say, 'Oh, is that all?' as if to say weird things happen all the time, the world is full of weirdness, there is

no need to get excited. But if a witch who is a teacher talks about something *extremely* weird happening then you know it must be something extremely, extremely weird.

Kipp Kindle glanced at Tobias and Cymphany. They both looked back at him and shrugged their shoulders.

‘Kipp Kindle,’ snarled Mrs Turgan. ‘You always look suspicious, you obnoxious troublemaker, but you look particularly suspicious now.’

Kipp jumped. His cheeky grin was gone and he was suddenly frozen with fear at the sight of the angry witch, who only last week had turned Benedict Bott into a pumpkin, and the poor boy had been sitting on the class windowsill, rotting, ever since. ‘Honestly, Mrs Turgan,’ Kipp said. ‘I don’t know anything about the extremely weird thing that has happened.’

Mrs Turgan reached inside her robes, which is where everyone knew she kept her wand. She had that look in her eye as if she was having

the delicious thought of turning someone into a camel, when she noticed timid Henrietta Humpling's raised hand.

‘What is it, Miss Humpling?’ Mrs Turgan sighed, in a way that indicated she was upset at having her malicious and wonderful thoughts of turning Kipp into a camel interrupted.

Henrietta Humpling was eleven. She was one-third vampire, one-third werewolf and one-third Dutch. ‘Mrs Turgan, what is this extremely weird thing that has happened?’ she asked.

An evil sneer spread across Terrible Turgan's face. ‘You'll find out soon enough, you unfortunate little girl, in fact, all you wretched children will soon find out what the extremely weird thing that has happened is. Now, I must continue with my broth. I can't waste my time teaching mathematics to the likes of you.’

A large disappointed frown dropped across Ug's face, but then Mrs Turgan added, ‘Ug will take the rest of the class.’

Ug was overjoyed with this prospect, and

with his size-eighteen feet and gargantuan grin he clumsily made his way to the front of the class.

Ug pulled down the whiteboard, revealing a sentence that read:

**The capital of New Zealand is Wellington,
not Auckland as most people think.**

Which was an unusual thing to find, as they weren't doing geography this morning. But so many things in Huggabie Falls were weird, so Ug ignored it, wiped it off and proceeded to write on the whiteboard such advanced algebra that Albert Einstein would have had scratched his head in bewilderment.

Ug's algebra was so torturous that the children were almost relieved when Mrs Turgan's broth exploded and everyone had to evacuate the classroom as quickly as possible.



Definitely Not a Pirate

If you ever want to find out about something that has happened in Huggabie Falls—say if you were three inquisitive children who had just been told of an extremely weird occurrence by your teacher, who also happens to be a witch—then your first port of call should be the home of old Mr Harold Haurik, as no one knows more about the goings on in Huggabie Falls than gruff, unshaven Harold Haurik, with his wooden leg and his eye patch.

You might be surprised to learn that Mr Haurik has no pirate ancestry, despite his pirate-like appearance. In fact, he will object strongly to any observation that he resembles those ‘murderous scavengers o’ th’ seas’, as he angrily calls pirates. But, even though he wasn’t a pirate, Mr Haurik did possess treasure, not of the buried variety, but rather the treasure of knowledge.

On the day that the extremely weird thing happened in Huggabie Falls, it was this treasure that Kipp, Tobias and Cymphany desperately needed. So, after they’d evacuated their classroom, they went to visit Mr Haurik, who lived in a caravan on the shore of the bottomless lake.

Mr Haurik’s caravan had started out as a standard one, until he decided to increase the height of the interior ceiling to accommodate the parrot he had recently purchased to sit on his shoulder. Further minor renovations followed and before long Mr Haurik’s tiny caravan had



become a four-storey, eight-bedroom mansion, with a six-car garage, an undercover swimming pool and a rooftop tennis court, all of which could still be towed behind an ordinary motor car.

‘Ahoy, me hearties,’ called Mr Haurik from his deck, sitting, fully clothed, for some strange reason, in one of his caravan’s three hot-tub spas. ‘To what do I owe yer visit?’

It would have looked quite weird to any passer-by—a man who looked like a pirate, with a parrot perched on his shoulder, sitting fully clothed in a spa out the front of a four-storey caravan, talking to three children wearing school uniforms that were covered in bits of marinated bats’ tongue from a recently exploded cauldron. Then again, any passer-by who lived in Huggabie Falls would think nothing of it—this was Huggabie Falls after all.

‘You shouldn’t put your wooden leg in the water Mr Haurik,’ warned Cymphany, as she and Kipp and Tobias walked across the

caravan's gangplank. 'The wood will rot, unless you've got some waterproof varnish on it or something.'

Mr Haurik looked down at his submerged limb. 'I can't stand me wooden leg anyways. People keep mistakin' me for one o' those murderous scavengers o' th' seas!'

'A pirate?' said Cymphany. 'I can't imagine why people would mistake you for a pirate.' She smiled, as if to say, perhaps it's not just the leg but the eye patch, the parrot and the alarming amount of pirate talk you are always using.

Mr Haurik moved his eye patch to his other eye. 'Young Cymphany Chan, be that ye, lass? And bless me barnacles, if that isn't scallywag Tobias Treachery. Ye have grown since I last saw ye. And Kipp Kindle, how be yer poor ol' mum and dad?'

Kipp looked uneasy when Mr Haurik mentioned his parents. 'We're here to find out about the extremely weird thing that has happened in Huggabie Falls, Mr Haurik.

Can you tell us what it is?’ Kipp was often embarrassed by his family, because they were so weird, even by Huggabie Falls’ particularly weird standards.

‘No one at school could tell us, and Mrs Turgan won’t tell us,’ said Kipp, as if to say nasty old witches like Mrs Turgan take great joy in keeping secrets from children they despise. ‘But everyone’s talking about what it could be.’

With the mention of the extremely weird thing that had happened, Mr Haurik launched himself from the hot tub, sending bucket-loads of water into the air so they rained down over Kipp, Tobias and Cymphany. Now the three children were soaking wet with Mr Haurik’s filthy spa water and Mrs Turgan’s marinated bats’ tongues. All things considered they would have preferred not to be soaked in either.

‘Ye mean ye don’t be knowin’ nothin’ about th’ extremely weird thing that has happened?’ Mr Haurik hollered, shaking his fists in the air—his dripping wet jacket sleeves flapping water

everywhere. ‘This town and its wicked secrets.’

‘Secrets, secrets, wicked secrets,’ squawked Mr Haurik’s parrot.

‘I should get me cutlass and slay that barnacle-covered Turgan for not tellin’ ye kiddies th’ truth straightaway, especially ye young Kindle, as it affects ye so.’

‘Affects me?’ Kipp blinked. ‘What is it, Mr Haurik?’ Kipp asked, as if to say just tell us what’s going on, would you? We can’t handle the suspense much longer.

Now Harold Haurik knew what the extremely weird thing that had happened was, and he would have told the children right then, if not for the loud ding of his oven timer sounding at that very moment.

Mr Haurik’s ears pricked up, as did his parrot’s, if parrots even have ears, which I assume they must because they seem to hear things. ‘Arrr!’ Mr Haurik said. ‘That’ll be me muffins. I’ve got to make up me icin’ and draw little skulls and crossbones on top o’ them. Then

ye sprogs'll be helping me eat th' tasty morsels, I imagine.'

Mr Haurik turned to go inside.

'Mr Haurik?' Kipp tugged at Mr Haurik's jacket, as if to say aren't you forgetting something? 'What about the extremely weird thing that has happened?'

Mr Haurik turned back, blocking out the sun. His face was suddenly dark and eerie. He loomed over young Kipp as someone, flyswatter in hand, might loom over a tiny fly.

'Run home, Kipp Kindle. Ye may want to scamper in the other direction rather than face th' great horror that awaits ye there, but ye must go. Ye and yer friends need to sort out this extremely weird thing that has happened. Huggabie Falls is dependin' on ye, kids. Could happen to me next. Could happen to all o' us.'

Then, as if someone switched a switch inside Mr Haurik from fearful back to cheerful, he returned to the topic of muffins. 'Now me stomach be cryin' out for a feast o' banana and

walnuts. Inside we go to me grand dinin' room, me hearties.'

But would you want to stick around and eat banana-and-walnut muffins cooked by a man who is not a pirate who has just told you about a great horror awaiting you at home that has something to do with an extremely weird thing that has happened? No, of course you wouldn't. I was in exactly the same situation last week, except that the muffins were chocolate, not banana-and-walnut, and let me tell you I didn't hang around to eat a single one. Neither did Kipp, Tobias and Cymphany. They were already halfway down the street before Mr Haurik had even finished his sentence about going inside.

'You don't suppose it's anything too serious,' Tobias said as they ran.

'I don't know?' Kipp replied as best he could, while running as fast as he could. 'I don't want to spend time discussing it. I just want to find out what *it* is as soon as possible.'

'Wait a minute,' yelled Cymphany, sliding to

a stop as though she'd just run into in a large puddle of glue.

Kipp and Tobias screeched to a stop too. 'What?' they said in urgent unison.

Cymphany shrugged. 'I forgot to tell Mr Haurik that Roseau is the capital of Dominica, an island in the Caribbean, which I thought Mr Haurik might be interested in, seeing as there used to be a lot of pirates in the Caribbean.'

Tobias frowned. 'What is it with you and capital cities, Cymphany?' You wrote that capital city sentence, on the whiteboard, didn't you?'

Cymphany shrugged. 'I just like them, that's all.'

Tobias looked confused. 'You like capital cities?'

Kipp, on the other hand, had no time for confusion. He had already started running again, realising that right now talk of capital cities was far less important than getting home.

'You're weird, Cym,' said Tobias, and he ran off after Kipp.

Cymphany looked quite pleased with herself, as if she wanted nothing more than to be at least a little bit weird, which of course she did. And then she ran off after her friends.





The Business Card

Despite his name, Tobias Treachery was one of the most loyal friends anyone could ever have. This could not be said for the rest of the Treachery family, who lived their lives, as their family name would suggest, as dishonestly and disloyally as humanly possible.

So widespread was the Treachery family's treachery that there was not one person in all of Huggabie Falls who had not been a victim of a treacherous Treachery family act. This had

earned the Treachery family a reputation as the most disliked family in all of Huggabie Falls. So it was no surprise that the Treacherys had to barricade the doors and windows of their house with planks of wood to keep the endless stream of revenge-seekers out.



All of this meant that Tobias had a mild vitamin D deficiency, from the lack of sunlight finding its way into his house, and he never had

many friends at school, or, to be more accurate, it meant he never had *any* friends at school. Until Kipp Kindle moved to Huggabie Falls. Kipp's family was the weirdest family ever, and so he didn't have any friends at school either, so Tobias and Kipp had that in common. Before long they became best of friends and subsequently Tobias spent a lot of time at the Kindles' house. Tobias really liked the Kindles' house, especially the fact that it had no wooden boards over the windows, which meant the rooms were always full of sunlight, and the indoor plants didn't die all the time.

Tobias spent so much time at the Kindles' house that you could say it had become his second home, in fact he spent so much time you could say it had become his second, third, fourth and fifth homes.

It was due to the fact that Tobias considered himself an honorary Kindle, that Mr Haurik's ominous warning that something terrible was happening to the Kindles created a rising ball of

panic in Tobias's stomach, which spurred him to run faster than he ever knew he could.

However, when Tobias, Kipp and Cymphany arrived at 1778 Digmont Drive, the home of the Kindles, Kipp held up his hand to stop his friends.

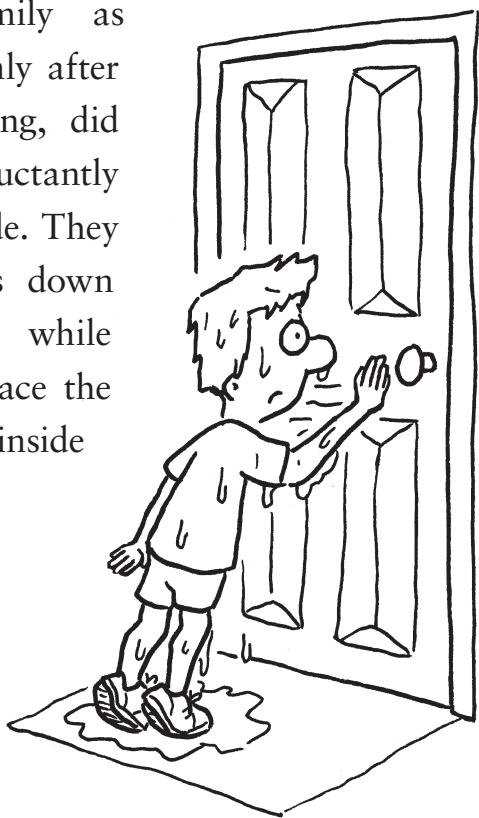
'I have to go in alone,' Kipp said. 'And face whatever horror lays within—it's my house, after all. You and Cymphany needn't also be subjected to it.' For all Kipp knew the great horror might be dangerous. People don't often talk of great horrors when they are describing gentle and completely non-dangerous things.

Tobias and Cymphany were quite upset by Kipp's order. Cymphany, like Tobias, had spent so much time at the Kindles' house that it was like a second home to her, too. When Cymphany had first moved to town she didn't have any friends, due to the fact that her family was the most normal family in all of Huggabie Falls. It was ironic that Cymphany was an outcast due to her family being so normal, while

Kipp was an outcast because his family was so weird. But Cymphany was lucky to become an outcast, because she became friends with Kipp and Tobias as a result, and in them she found a couple of loyal and wonderful companions.

So she was just as worried about Kipp's family as Tobias was, and only after a period of whining, did she and Tobias reluctantly agree to wait outside. They plonked themselves down on the footpath while Kipp prepared to face the unknown situation inside his house, alone.

With a gulp of courage Kipp approached the front door, the words of Haurik still echoing in his



mind—‘th’ great horror that awaits ye there’.

Now, as the storyteller, I should warn you that what Kipp is about to see when he enters his house is unbelievably scary, and anyone reading this who suffers from either a nervous disorder or a heart condition should put this book down immediately. I cannot take any responsibility for any insane fright suffered, or subsequent emotional trauma endured, if you the reader make the conscious decision to keep on reading at this point.

Wait a minute, what am I saying? I seem to be a little confused, because this book is *The Extremely Weird Thing that Happened in Huggabie Falls*, not *The Unbelievably Scary Thing that Happened in Huggabie Falls*. An unbelievably scary thing did happen in Huggabie Falls once, but I can’t imagine why anyone would ever want to write a book about that. How silly of me. It must have been Mr Haurik’s exaggerated talk of a great horror. What Kipp

was about to see was not unbelievably scary, at least not to you and me, so I must apologise, and you can feel free to read on at your leisure.

Kipp opened his front door.

‘Shocked’ is not nearly strong enough a word to describe what Kipp felt when he saw his home. It’s akin to using the word ‘minor’ to describe a head-on collision between a truck carrying a load of dynamite and a truck carrying a load of matches. But there really is no single word that adequately describes the complete and utter amazement and disbelief that a person feels when they look upon an incomprehensibly weird scene, so ‘shocked’ will have to do for now.

Kipp’s father sat, legs crossed, in his big brown leather armchair, with a copy of the *Huggabie Falls Gazette* open in front of him. As the door shut, he said, ‘Kipp, my boy, how was school today?’ He looked his son up and down, and his moustache twitched. ‘Good lord, you look out of breath, and you’re wet! You look as

though you've been soaked in hot-tub spa water and is that'—he sniffed the air—'the smell of marinated bats' tongues?'

Despite Kipp's shock, he had to be impressed by his father's astounding olfactory accuracy.

'What have you been up to?' Mr Kindle asked, as if to say I can't imagine any activity that would involve you smothering yourself in marinated bats' tongues and then climbing into a spa, fully-clothed.

But Kipp didn't respond to his father's question. He was too busy staring, mouth agape. In the background, his younger sister Kaedy sat crossed-legged on the lounge-room floor, watching cartoons.

'I know,' Kaedy said, without taking her eyes off the television. 'They're normal. It's weird. Get over it.'

Kipp's mother strolled into the room, holding wet clay-covered hands out in front of her. The sound of a pottery wheel winding down could be heard coming from the other room—it may

not surprise you to learn that Mrs Kindle had recently started attending pottery classes.

‘I thought I heard the door. Hello, dear.’ She stopped and wiped her hands down her apron, upon which were the words ‘*Kiss the Cook*’, although it would have been more appropriate if the words upon it were ‘*Kiss the Potter*’. As she wiped her hands, one eyebrow went up at Kipp. ‘Why do you smell of marinated bats’ tongues?’

‘I’ve already asked him that,’ said Kipp’s father. ‘And he just stands there staring at me like a fish. He hasn’t even blinked yet. A fly just flew into his mouth and he didn’t even notice.’

Kipp’s parents continued to stare at him, and Kipp continued to stare at them. It took him a full minute before he could even speak, he was so shocked, although we have already established that he was far more than shocked, but I still haven’t thought of a better word so we’ll just have to stick with it.

When Kipp finally found himself able to speak, all he could think to say was, ‘What’s

happened to you? You're both so, so...'

Then Kipp suddenly realised what they were, it was something he had always yearned for, but now that it had unexpectedly happened it was not at all like he had imagined.

'...normal.'

Kipp's parents glanced at each other.

'Yes.' His mother smiled. 'It's awfully strange, isn't it? But what about you? You're acting very strangely, dear. Very...what's the word?'

'Weird?' suggested Kaedy.

'Yes.' Kipp's mother nodded. 'That's it, weird.'

Weird? *Weird*? Kipp could hardly believe the words coming out of his mother's mouth. His mother, one of the weirdest people in all of Huggabie Falls, second in weirdness only to his father, was calling *him* weird.

'Speaking of weird,' said Kipp's mother, as if she'd just remembered something. 'A letter came for you today from your friend, Cymphany.'

Kipp's mother pulled a piece of paper out of the front pocket of her apron. 'It's a letter that simply reads, "The capital of Brazil is Brasilia."' Kipp's mother looked up. 'What do you suppose that means? Brasilia? It's a bit odd for Cymphany to send a letter like that, isn't it? She used to be such a normal girl.'

'She's a looney,' Kaedy chimed in, still butting into the conversation without ever taking her eyes off the television screen.

Kipp didn't have time to wonder why Cymphany was obsessed all of a sudden with capital cities. Kipp was about to explode. He couldn't believe what his eyes and ears were telling him: his parents were normal. Kaedy may have been okay with it, because all she really cared about was watching cartoons, but it was too much for Kipp and he ran screaming from the house.

Cymphany and Tobias, who were waiting on the footpath, heard Kipp screaming as he bolted

down the driveway. They jumped up as Kipp almost ran them over.

‘What happened?’ Cymphany’s face was flooded with concern. ‘Was it as horrible as Mr Haurik described?’

Kipp took a moment to catch his breath. ‘Worse.’

‘No,’ said Tobias. He looked sick.

‘They’re normal!’ Kipp said. ‘My parents are completely normal.’

Cymphany and Tobias then looked at each other, puzzled.

‘So,’ said Tobias, slowly. ‘To clarify, everything’s okay, then?’ Tobias said it not so much as a question but more as a statement, as if to say maybe they could just forget all this talk of an extremely weird thing now and concentrate on enjoying the rest of this sunny day.

‘You don’t get it,’ said Kipp. ‘They’re n-o-r-m-a-l.’

‘You mean...’ said Cymphany.

‘Yes.’ Kipp nodded. ‘Completely.’

‘You mean they’re not—’ Cymphany started to say.

‘No,’ said Kipp.

It took a few seconds for this extraordinary information to sink in, and all three confused children said nothing for a short while.

Then Cymphany shook her head. ‘But what does this all mean?’

‘I don’t know, but I will bet you it has something to do with this card,’ said Tobias, holding up the card to which he was referring. ‘I found it in your letterbox, Kipp.’

‘I wondered what you were doing over there,’ said Cymphany.

They all huddled around the small business card that Tobias held. The card read:

Dark’s Weirdness Investigation
and Eradication Agency
Proprietor: Felonious Dark
123 Digmont Drive, Huggabie Falls
‘I find weirdness and I remove it.’
Free, no obligation quotes.

‘Well,’ said Kipp, as if to say that is a rather conveniently placed clue, isn’t it.

Now, you, as the reader, may suspect that I, as the writer, planted that business card in the Kindles’ letterbox, just to keep this story moving along. But I didn’t, I promise. I would never resort to such a despicable act of interference. Besides, I am not in the book so there is no way I could have planted it. I’ll admit it is an amazing coincidence that it was there, in Kipp’s letterbox, but I can hardly help that—coincidences happen, don’t they? I am not the god of coincidences, I can’t control them, so just leave me alone.

If we are quite finished with this business of god-of-coincidences accusations flying about, how about we get back on with the story? Yes, good idea. I agree.

When Kipp, Tobias and Cymphany finished reading the card, Kipp said, ‘It sounds like Dark’s Weirdness Investigation and Eradication

Agency could definitely have been responsible for my parents turning normal all of a sudden. I mean look at this man's name for starters. Felonious Dark! Have you ever heard of a first name and a surname that don't begin with the same letter? That's very unusually weird.'

Sorry to interrupt again, but I just wanted to point out that if you, the reader, are the observant type then you will have already noticed that Mr Felonious Dark is the first character to appear in this book whose first name and surname don't begin with the same letter. If you haven't noticed this, well, I'm sorry to say you might not be the observant type, or you might sometimes be the observant type but were just a little bit out of form as you sailed through the first two and a half chapters of this book, blissfully unaware that you missed this fact, and probably many others. Or you might have noticed it, but put it down to an amazing coincidence, and although there are many amazing coincidences

in Huggabie Falls—such as the business card in the letterbox—this is not one of them.

One of the many weird things about Huggabie Falls is that everyone who lives there has a first name and a surname beginning with the same letter. So the fact that Mr Felonious Dark first name and second name started with different letters instantly makes him a highly suspicious character indeed.

This matching first name and surname thing is just another one of the many weird things about Huggabie Falls. If someone were so inclined, someone could write a whole book about how Huggabie Falls got to be so weird and how the many weird things came to be, and, now that I think about it, I very much intend to do that myself one day, but first I must finish this book, mustn't I. Now, I seem to have become sidetracked again. Where was I?

Oh, that's right, I remember now.

As Kipp, Cymphany and Tobias, discussed

the unusually named Felonious Dark, and his weirdness investigation and eradication agency, Kipp's mum appeared on the front porch and sang out, 'Kipp, dear, come inside for dinner. No more playing with your friends now. I've made lasagne.'

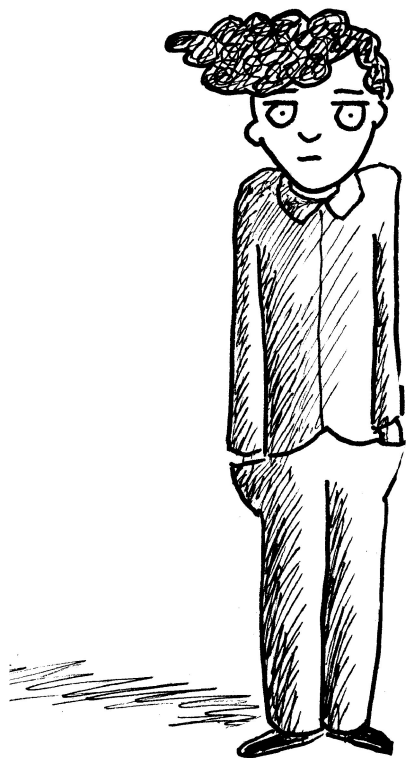
It was now Tobias and Cymphany's turn to be shocked—I say 'shocked', of course, because I still haven't thought of a better word for their utter disbelief and amazement—at what they saw.

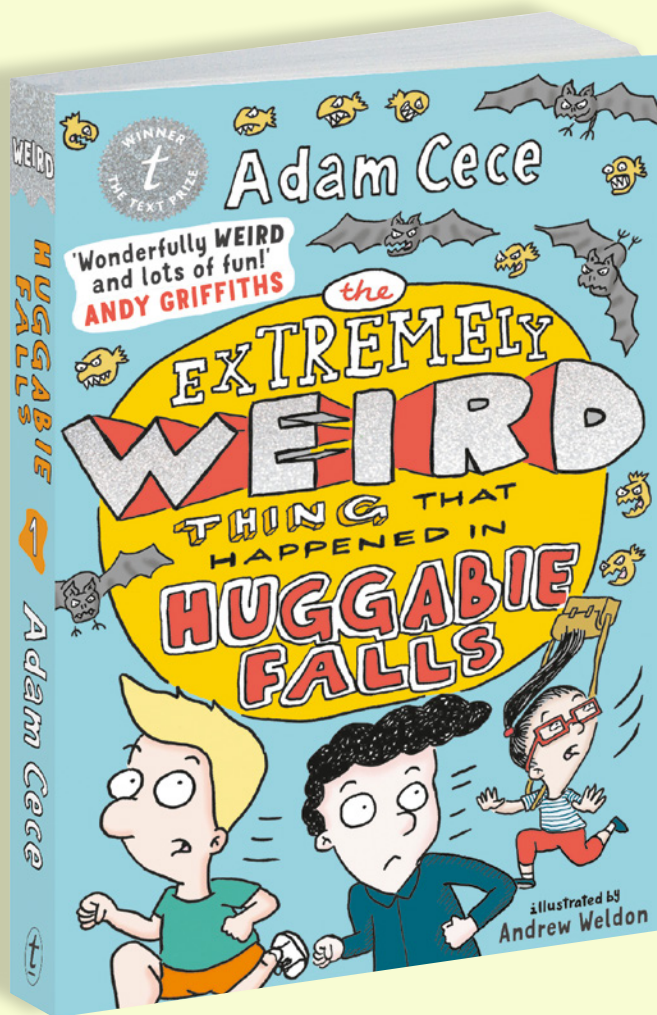
'First thing tomorrow we are going down to that weirdness investigation and eradication agency to demand some answers,' said Kipp. Cymphany and Tobias nodded in dumbfounded agreement. They couldn't take their astonished eyes off Mrs Kindle. They'd never seen her like this before.

'Look at her just standing there saying she's made lasagne for tea,' Kipp said, as if it was the most absurd thing ever, as if his mum had just come out and proclaimed she had built a rocket

and was flying to Mars that evening.

‘I know,’ said Tobias. ‘This is all just too weird, even for Huggabie Falls.’





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