

Scenes from JUMPING THE SCRATCH by Sarah Weeks

JAMIE

Audrey Krouch was in my class but I didn't know her. I didn't want to. I didn't like girls, and besides, she was strange.

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

She smelled funny, like fried onions, and her bangs were cut too short, making her pasty white forehead look huge. The strangest thing about her though, were the glasses she wore.

NARRATOR TWO (Jamie V/O)

They were men's black plastic frames, way too wide for her face, and they didn't have any lenses in them. You could have stuck your fingers right through the holes and poked her in the eyes if you'd wanted to.

JAMIE

One day Marge sent me down to get the mail. When I got there, Audrey Krouch was standing in front of the mailboxes with a bunch of envelopes in her hand. What was weird was I almost got the feeling she'd been waiting for me.

AUDREY

Hey.

JAMIE

Hey yourself.

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

I walked past her to get to our mailbox.

AUDREY

Can I ask you a question?

NARRATOR ONE

I shrugged. She could ask, but that didn't mean I was going to answer.

AUDREY

How come you're afraid to walk on the driveway?

JAMIE

I felt my palms go slick. I hadn't expected that question. I reached into the mailbox and pulled out the mail, making a big point of sorting through it, like I was looking for something important. Keeping my eyes down, I tried to walk past her but she stepped right in front of me and stood there with her arms crossed, blocking my way.

AUDREY

Don't pretend you didn't hear me. I asked you a question. How come you're afraid to walk on the driveway?

JAMIE

Who says I am?

AUDREY

I do.

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

She pushed up her big glasses with a thumb.

AUDREY

I mean, I guess a person doesn't *have* to walk on a driveway if they don't want to. It doesn't necessarily mean they're afraid, right?

NARRATOR TWO (Jamie V/O)

I shrugged.

AUDREY

They could be looking for garter snakes or maybe they don't want to get gravel in their shoes, right?

NARRATOR TWO (Jamie V/O)

I shrugged again. If Audrey Krouch wanted to stand there all day answering her own questions, it was okay with me.

AUDREY

I guess those are some pretty good reasons why a person wouldn't walk on a driveway. And I guarantee you I could come up with a bunch more just as good as those if I had to, but I don't have to because I happen to know the reason you don't want to walk on the driveway is because you're scared to.

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

I tasted butterscotch and swallowed. Audrey was watching me carefully. She pushed her glasses up again.

AUDREY

I think you should know, I have ESP.

JAMIE

The last thing I needed was Audrey Krouch sniffing around in my business. I pushed past her and started back down the road along the ditch. But just as I was about to cut into the weeds she called after me.

AUDREY

Wait! It's not the driveway, is it? It's the office. That's what you're scared of. *The office.*

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

My heart gave one hard thud in my chest then I whirled around and shouted at her –

JAMIE

You shut up, Audrey Krouch. You don't know what you're talking about. Do you hear me?

You don't know squirt.

NARRATOR TWO

But apparently she did.

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

Later on that week I ran into Audrey in the laundry shed where I was putting in a load of clothes for Marge.

AUDREY

I really do have special powers, you know.

JAMIE

That's the dumbest thing I ever heard. You don't have any special powers.

AUDREY

I do so. Like I told you, I have ESP. Extra sensory perception. I can see things nobody else can see.

JAMIE

Must be those glasses.

AUDREY

For your information, these glasses *do* help me see.

JAMIE

Oh come on. They don't even have glass in them. How could they help you see?

AUDREY

It's not that kind of seeing.

JAMIE

What other kind is there?

AUDREY

The kind that let's me read someone's mind.

JAMIE

Give me a break. You can't read minds, Audrey. And you don't have ESP either.

AUDREY

Oh yeah? Then how come I know you're scared of the office?

JAMIE

I told you, you don't know squirt.

AUDREY

I suppose I don't know squirt about cherry cans either then, huh?

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

A chill went right up my spine and made me shiver so hard I bit my tongue.

JAMIE

Ouch!

AUDREY

I can hypnotize people too. The reason I'm so good at it is because I have ESP. It helps if you can read their minds first.

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

While the washing machines chugged away, Audrey and I went and sat down on a bench outside the shed and started tossing pebbles at the metal trashcan.

AUDREY

So what's the deal with your aunt, is she crazy?

NARRATOR TWO

Audrey leaned down and scooped up a handful of gravel.

JAMIE

Who told you that?

AUDREY

No one, but I've seen her. She walks around outside in her pajamas.

NARRATOR ONE

Audrey closed one eye and took aim before letting a pebble fly.

NARRATOR TWO

Ping!

JAMIE

Yeah, well, lots of people walk around outside wearing strange things.

NARRATOR ONE

I gave her a pointed look and Audrey pushed up her glasses.

AUDREY

I told you already, these help me see.

JAMIE

Well, my Aunt Saphy's not crazy. She got hit in the head, and lost her memory, that's all.

NARRATOR TWO

Ping!

AUDREY

Here's a question for you. How much would you charge to eat a pinecone?

NARRATOR ONE

One thing I will say about Audrey Krouch's questions, they weren't like anybody else's in the world.

JAMIE

What kind of thing is that to ask a person?

AUDREY

What's wrong with it? All I want to know is how much you'd charge.

JAMIE

Why would I charge anything?

AUDREY

You mean you'd eat a pinecone for *free*?"

JAMIE

No, I mean I wouldn't eat a pinecone at all.

AUDREY

I would, for a million bucks. Wouldn't you?

JAMIE

For a million bucks? Sure.

AUDREY

How 'bout for a thousand?

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

I tipped my bottle up and drained the last couple of inches of sweet pop. Then I wiped my mouth on my sleeve.

JAMIE

Yeah, I'd do it for a thousand. But who's going to pay me a thousand bucks to eat a pinecone?

AUDREY

There are a lot of kooks in the world.

JAMIE

I can think of one I know right now.

AUDREY

Very funny.

NARRATOR ONE

We went inside to check on the laundry.

AUDREY

You thirsty?

JAMIE

I thought you said you could read my mind.

AUDREY

I can. I was just being polite.

NARRATOR TWO

She walked over to the pop machine and gave it a good swift kick in the side. There was a deep rumbling from within, and a second later an ice cold bottle of orange Faygo rolled out.

JAMIE

Hey!

AUDREY

Hey, yourself.

NARRATOR ONE

She kicked the machine again and the same thing happened.

Using the opener in the front of the machine she pried off the caps and handed me one of the bottles.

JAMIE

I took a long swallow.

AUDREY

See, I knew you were thirsty.

JAMIE

I just like orange soda is all.

NARRATOR ONE (Jamie V/O)

But I have to admit...

JAMIE

I was beginning to wonder if I had misjudged Audrey Krouch.

