

**JUMPING THE SCRATCH**  
**BY 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)**

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)**

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)**

He walked past her to get to the mailbox.

**(AUDREY)**

Can I ask you a question?

**(NARRATOR)**

He shrugged. She could ask, but that didn't mean he 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)**

Audrey pushed up her big glasses with a thumb.

**(AUDREY)**

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

**(NARRATOR)**

Jamie shrugged.

**(AUDREY)**

You could be looking for garter snakes or maybe you don't want to get gravel in your shoes, right?

**(NARRATOR)**

He shrugged again.

**(NARRATOR)**

If Audrey Krouch wanted to stand there all day answering her own questions,

**(NARRATOR)**

it was okay with him.

**(AUDREY)**

I guess those are some pretty good reasons why you might not walk on the 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)**

He tasted butterscotch and swallowed. Audrey was watching him carefully.

**(NARRATOR)**

She pushed her glasses up again.

**(AUDREY)**

I think you should know, I have ESP.

**(JAMIE V/O)**

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)**

Jamie's heart gave one hard thud in his chest then he 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)**

But apparently she did.

**(NARRATOR)**

Later on that week Jamie ran into Audrey in the laundry shed where he 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 lets 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)**

A chill went right up Jamie's spine and made him shiver so hard he bit his 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)**

While the washing machines chugged away, Audrey and Jamie 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)**

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)**

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

**(NARRATOR) & (NARRATOR)**

*Ping!*

**(JAMIE)**

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

**(NARRATOR)**

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

**(AUDREY)**

I told you already, these help me see.

**(JAMIE)**

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

**(NARRATOR) & (NARRATOR)**

*Ping!*

**(AUDREY)**

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

**(NARRATOR)**

Here's the thing 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)**

Jamie tipped his bottle up and drained the last couple of inches of sweet pop.

Then he wiped his mouth on his 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)**

They 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)**

Audrey walked over to the pop machine and gave it a good swift kick in the side. ( bangs) 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)**

Audrey kicked the machine again and the same thing happened. ( bangs)

**(NARRATOR)**

She handed Jamie 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)**

But he had to admit...he was beginning to wonder if he had misjudged Audrey Krouch.

