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Opening extract from
The Ostrich of Pudding Lane

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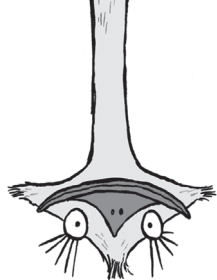
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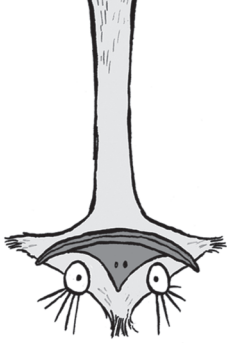
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Chapter 1

Who Is K.J.?

The note in Ross's bag was short and simple.

Do you want to go out with me?

If you do, meet me after lunch

by the conker tree.

K.J.

Ross turned a deep red and quickly folded the note. He pushed it to the bottom of his bag. He didn't dare look up, so he stared at his book. His mind was racing. K.J.? That was the new girl – Kelly Jessup.

Kelly Jessup! Did Ross want to go out with *her*? Yes! Yes! Kelly made his legs turn to jelly. Kelly made his heart thump like a pounding drum. Kelly made ...

“Ross? Ross? Are you listening?” his teacher Mrs Norton said with a sigh. “I said, what do you call a triangle with three equal sides?”

“Kelly,” Ross replied dreamily.

“Don't be so stupid. You can't call a triangle *Kelly*,” Mrs Norton snapped.

The rest of the class were laughing, all except for Katie. She waved her arm in the air.

“I think it’s a great idea,” she said brightly. “We could give every shape a name. Squares could be called Norman, and circles could be called Tracy, and rectangles ...”

“Do stop being silly,” Mrs Norton grumbled, while the rest of the class gazed at Katie as if she were truly weird.

“Roger,” Katie went on. “Roger Rectangle. That would be a good name.”

“Oh, give me strength!” Mrs Norton groaned. “A triangle with three equal sides is called ...”

But then her voice was drowned out by the bell for lunch.

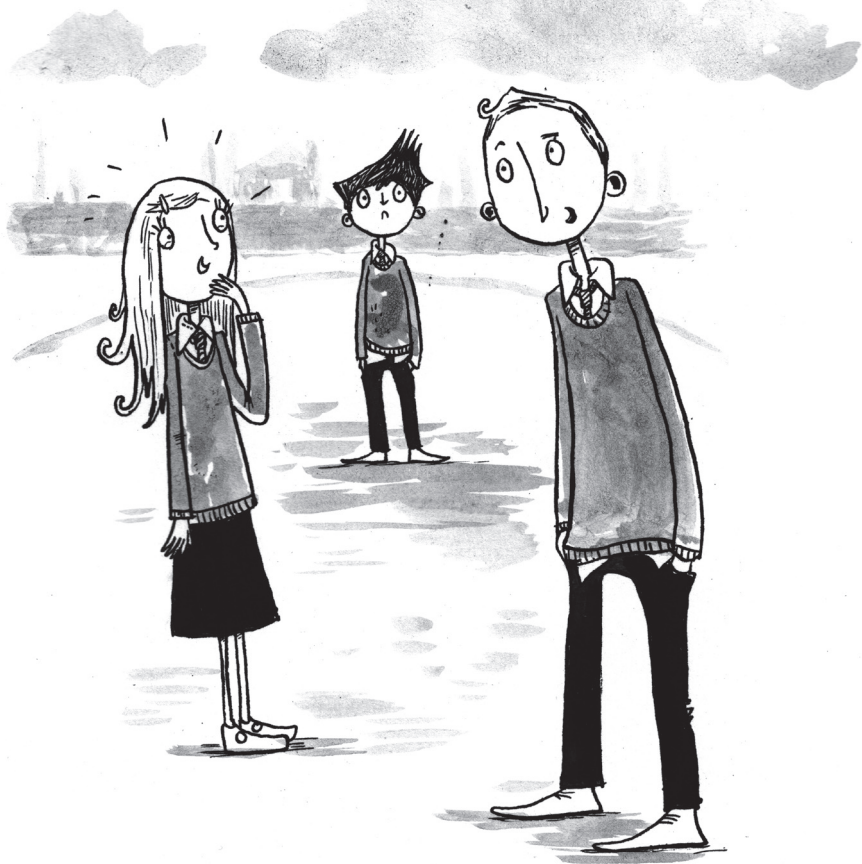
Books were slammed back into desks or pushed into bags. Everyone made for the door.

Ross could hardly wait. Kelly Jessup – she was going to wait for him by the conker tree!

Ross bolted down his food and then sat on his chair in the hall, fretting. The dinner ladies wouldn't let him go until everyone had finished. Ross reckoned he would die of old age before that snail Gloria chomped her way through her rice pudding. At last she sucked down her last spoonful.

Ross dashed out to the playground but stopped before he got too close. 'Play it cool,' he told himself. 'Take it easy. Just walk across slowly.'

The conker tree came into view. Yes,



Kelly really was there! She was laughing at something Ian Tufnell was telling her.

Ross snorted. Ian was an idiot. OK, so maybe he was tall and good-looking and

brilliant at judo. Apart from that, he was a total no-brain. Everyone knew that.

Ross drifted across and smiled at Kelly. She gave him a little frown. Ross raised his eyebrows at her several times.

“Is there something wrong with your eyebrows?” she asked.

“Yes! No! I mean the answer is yes!” Ross said with a grin.

“There *is* something wrong with your eyebrows?”

“No, not my eyebrows. The note. Yes is the answer to the note.” Ross flashed his number one best smile.

All at once Ian was looming over Ross, who suddenly noticed what big hands Ian had.

“Why don’t you go somewhere else?” Ian the judo expert growled.

But Ross didn’t care about Ian. He was there for Kelly. He tried to look at her over Ian’s broad shoulder.

“I do want to go out with you!” he shouted.

Ian’s face turned to thunder. “You want to go out with *me*?”

Ross’s heart sank. Why was Ian so stupid? “Not you – her! Kelly.”

And that was when Ross’s wonderful world turned into a hopeless pile of rubbish.

Kelly’s eyes grew wide with horror. “Go out with you? You must be joking. I wouldn’t go out with you if we were the last two people left on this planet.”

Ian pushed Ross backwards. “Get lost, little boy. She’s going out with me.”

Ross’s heart was shredded. It had been such a wonderful dream. He turned away, while Kelly and Ian sniggered at him.

A hand gently touched his arm and he looked up.

It was Katie.

She gave him a little smile.

“It’s not that bad,” she told him.

“It is,” Ross muttered.

“The note wasn’t from Kelly,” she went on. “I didn’t realise we had the same initials. K.J. It was from me.”

“You!”

Katie smiled again, hopefully. “I put it in

your bag after Assembly this morning. What do you think?"

Ross was furious. He could not believe that he had got Kelly Jessup mixed up with Katie Jacobs. For heaven's sake – Katie Jacobs! The girl had freckles coming out of her ears! AND she was weird.

Ross turned on her. He was going to tell her that he wouldn't go out with her if they were the last two people left on the planet.

But he didn't. Instead his jaw dropped and he stared in stunned silence.

An ostrich had just come crashing through the school hedge.

An OSTRICH?????!!!!!!

Now the giant bird was striding across



the playground. It was making straight for
Katie and Ross, and it had a nasty glint in its
eyes.

