

Excerpt from *The Grumpiest Boy in the World*, written by Finegan Kruckemeyer. Not to be presented without official licensing. To enquire, please go to: finegankruckemeyer.com

Also available for reading as a musical (songs by Darren Clark) and an opera (composed by Joe Twist)

Scene Two

Zachary ushers in a Scientist, who narrates.

Scientist 1: The phenomenon of Zachary Briddling (aged seven years and four months, and living in the ninth house on 10th Street) is a strange one. What is extraordinary about the boy, is not easy to recognise at first. But Zachary Briddling (7 years, 4 months, 9th house, 10th Street)...

Zachary: Wait for it.

Scientist 1: Is Awfully Middling.

Zachary: This is it. Go, Science Person.

Scientist 1: His height is the average height of an average boy of his average age.

His hair sits in exactly the way, of an average boy's, on an average day.

When he dreams at night, Zachary dreams average dreams.

Zachary: *[Asleep]* I'm climbing a tree... Now I'm falling... Now there's a dog. But it's not a dog. It's a half dog, with a dinosaur head... It still barks though.

Scientist 1: When his family went to Mr Li's Dumpling Emporium on Thursday, and they opened fortune cookies, Zachary's said:

Zachary: *[Reads]* 'Congratulations: you're no better or worse off than anyone else'.

Are you for real!? Ahhhh!

Scientist 1: When Zachary Briddling auditioned for the School Play at the end of last year, he was given the part of: 'Man Walking Down A Street In A Backgroundy Kind of Way Not Really Doing Much'.

Zachary: What!? Why I... Ahhhh!

Scientist 1: Basically, Zachary Briddling is the most impossibly *possible* boy in the whole world. His favourite food is rice, the most common meal on the planet. His favourite pastime is playing football.

Zachary: *[To audience]* You too? Ahhhh!

Scientist 1: His first word was ‘mama’, and the first thing he ever wanted to be...

Zachary: Ha! No one would ever think of something this wild!

Scientist 1: ...was an astronaut.

Zachary: I didn’t know! Ahhhh!

Scientist 1: And when Zachary Briddling, Who Was Awfully Middling, turned up to the Year Two Dress-Up-Day Party as the craziest thing he could think of:

He enters as Spiderman, then looks around, dismay setting in.

Zachary: This is a conspiracy! Ahhhh!

Scientist 1: In years to come, Zachary Briddling will prob... Um, I don’t think this is true. I don’t really want to read this bit.

Zachary: Say it!

Scientist 1: ...Zachary Briddling will probably win an award for being the most... unbelievably unbelievable human being in the history of the world, ever.

...Really?

Zachary: Just read, Science Person!

Scientist 1: But for now, he is Middling and Average – with an average ten fingers, an average ten toes, an average ear on either side of his average head, and average feet placed in average shoes.

Zachary launches into another fit of frustration. Mum enters and watches.

Zachary: My normal is killing me, Mother!

Mum: There’s nothing wrong with normal, Zach.

Zachary: I know but... I want a... a smidgeon of amazingness (at something, at anything) to balance out all the gigantic amount of normalness I have.

Mum: And you can’t find any?

Zachary: Not a jot. I’m one hundred-and-twenty-forty-million percent normal!

Beat.

Mum: But of course that’s just normal for here.

Zachary: What?

Scientist 1: ...What?

Mum: Your averageness. You're only average, Zachary Briddling, for this place.

I mean... Think of all the other places, places that are full of... hairy things, and flying things, and round things, and not-round things. You'd look pretty un-average in any of those spots. Wouldn't you?

Zachary: Mm... And that's the moment I think of it. At the exact second when a scientist guy I invented was just leaving. *[Scientist smiles]* Was just leaving...

Scientist 1: Oh right! *[He goes]*

Zachary: At that precise instant when a pigeon had just landed on my windowsill, and a siren had just started up on the street, and Mum was just cleaning up crayons that had *somehow* ended up lying everywhere around the room. Just at that moment when Dad was looking for his best coffee mug...

Dad: You know – with the tennis player on it...

Zachary: And a plane was flying overhead, and the clock struck 4:15, and out in the countryside an old house that had been leaning sideways for years and years toppled to the ground.

The faintest of collapsings.

Dad: Found it!

Zachary: That's when Zachary Briddling, Who Was Awfully Middling – i.e. me – i.e. me, the hero of the story – decided to have an adventure! And the adventure was called... Drum roll...

Nothing.

Zachary: Mum! Dad! Drum roll I said!

They enter with drums and fail at finding a shared rhythm. Beat.

Zachary: Thanks for trying.

They exit.

Zachary: And the adventure was called: *'Finding Some Faraway Place Where The People Are So Crazily Different From Zachary Floyd Briddling, That He Ends Up Looking Like The Strangest Thing Ever!'*

Good title. And our hero sets to work! Scientist people!