

Sneak Peek at *Super Sketchy*
by Lesley Livingston



A TALE OF ONE WEIRDO

Daisy had never been able to talk about the annual treks from Dimly to Montreal with anyone other than Jess, who'd had to suffer through them every year too.

The whole thing was just too bizarre. Year after year, Dr. Fassbinder would perform a series of poky-proddy tests. Then Daisy and her mom would return home, where Daisy and Jess would exchange notes . . . and then pretend the visits had never happened as far as anyone else was concerned. Add to that Daisy's mom's *extreme* reluctance to talk about anything to do with Fassbinder or the Boredom Institute — or pandas — and Daisy just never brought it up. With anyone. Ever.

But for some reason, Daisy felt like she could confide in Kip. Maybe it was that they both had nutso grandmas. Or that he actually knew where — *what* — Dimly was. Or maybe it was that he was a little weird too, but seemed genuinely nice. Whatever it was, Daisy didn't get the impression Kip would turn around and snicker with his friends about her once she was gone. The fact that he didn't seem to have a lot of friends might have had something to do with that impression.

"The place reeks of Gorgonzola and garlic," Daisy said, trying to describe the weirdness that was the Boredom Institute. "And they have a serious pest-control problem. All you can hear when you're in the examination rooms is scurrying and squeaking. And *nothing* ever happens! At least, nothing *usually* happens."

"Usually?" Kip asked, leaning forward.

"Well . . . last time we were there," she said, trying hard to remember the details, "I had to fill out yet another weirdo questionnaire, only somebody had walked off with all the pens. I'm all hooked up to the machines and nobody's around, so I go into my knapsack to get my own. All I've got is this box of pencils from my mom's work . . ."

"And?"

"And, for the first time ever, something happens."

Kip leaned farther forward. "What?"

“I get a shock. From the pencil.”

“The . . . pencil.” Kip leaned back a little. “Okaaaay . . .”

“Right?” Daisy shrugged. “It’s *so* no big deal but all of a sudden the machine I’m hooked up to goes bonkers! Beeping and pinging and the needle zigzagging all over the graph paper like there’s an earthquake.”

“Weeeird . . .”

“*Right?* So I drop the pencil, and the machine goes instantly quiet. But the big mirror on the wall ripples — like someone’s leaning on the other side — and the scurrying and squeaking in the walls gets *really* loud.” Now it was Daisy’s turn to lean forward. After all those months of not having anyone — not even Jess — to tell her tale to, the details came pouring out of her like a ghost story told around a campfire, weird and spooky-cool. “And then I can hear Fassbinder and my mom talking in the waiting room. Then they’re yelling. Then the door opens, Mom busts in all crazy-eyes, grabs me, tears off all the wire-stickies — which, *ouch!* — hauls me out of the Institute, throws me into the car, and drives like a maniac back to Dimly. Like, non-stop.”

“Non-stop? That’s a heck of a drive!”

“I know!” Daisy nodded emphatically. “The only time she stops is at a Timmy’s for a whole tray of double doubles. And then, get *this*, when we’re walking back to the car, I see this . . . thing. In the sky.”

“Thing?”

“I’d call it a blimp,” Daisy said, instinctively checking the empty sky overhead, “but that’d be an insult to the average blimp. Anyway, Mom spots it too, body-checks me down behind a camper van, and makes me hide there until it putt-farts away over the horizon. Next thing I know, I’m back in Dimly. Briefly.”

“Then it’s burnt-rubber, panda-suit dreams,” Kip concluded, “and suddenly you’re the new kid in a new school on the other side of the country.”

“Yup.” Daisy nodded. “With an unlisted phone number.”

Kip glanced at the sky then too. The sun had reappeared, but who could guess for how long. “I gotta go,” he said, reluctantly.

Daisy nodded. “Me too.”

“Hey,” Kip said, before they parted ways on Comox Street, “you picked a camp for the long weekend yet?”

“Pff. Nah. This morning I was pretty sure I had my destiny all figured out, but now . . . I dunno.” She glanced sideways at Kip, at his scuffed jeans and the scrapes on his elbows from his failed parkour-ing. “I don’t have a calling, I guess.”

Kip grinned at her. “How can you have a calling when you’ve got an unlisted number?”