

Nelly ^{the} MONSTER Sitter

Grerks,
Squirms
&
Water
Greeps

KES
GRAY

Nelly ^{the}
MONSTER

Sitter

江苏工业学院图书馆

藏书章

To the Tillinghasts at number two

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First published in Great Britain in 2005
by Hodder Children's Books

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A Catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978 0 340 88432 4

Typeset in Baskerville by Avon DataSet Ltd,
Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire

Printed in the UK by CPI Bookmarque, Croydon, CR0 4TD

The paper and board used in this paperback by Hodder Children's Books are natural recyclable products made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The manufacturing processes conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

Hodder Children's Books
A division of Hachette Children's Books
338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH
An Hachette Livre UK company

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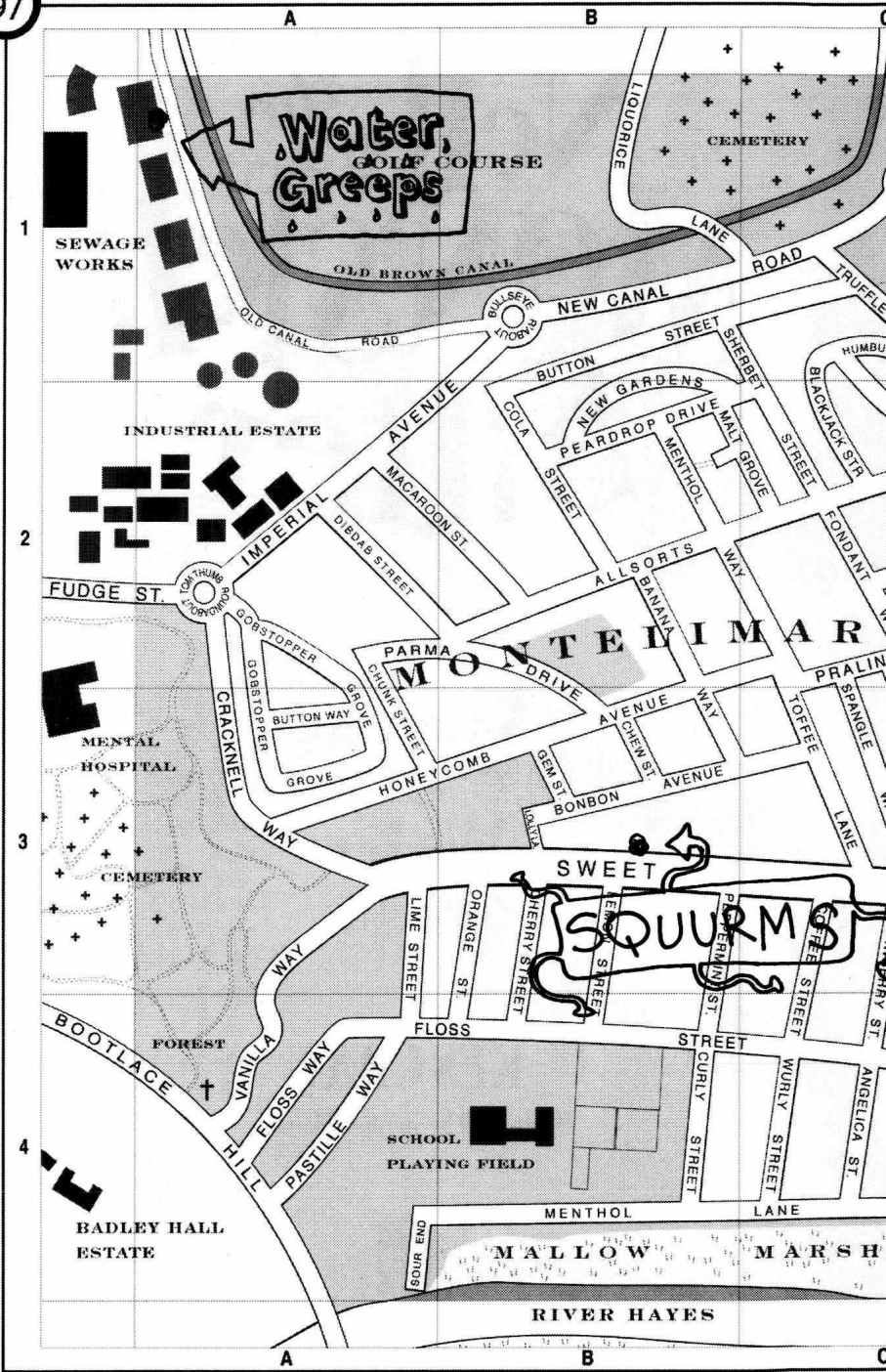
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NELLY THE MONSTER SITTER

'If monsters are real, how come I've never seen one?' said Nelly.

'Because they never go out,' said her dad.

'Why don't monsters ever go out?' said Nelly.

'Because they can never get a baby sitter,' said her dad.

Nelly thought about it. Her mum and dad never went out unless they could get a baby sitter. Why should monsters be any different?

'Then I shall become Nelly the Monster Sitter!' smiled Nelly.

THE
GREYKS
at No. 55

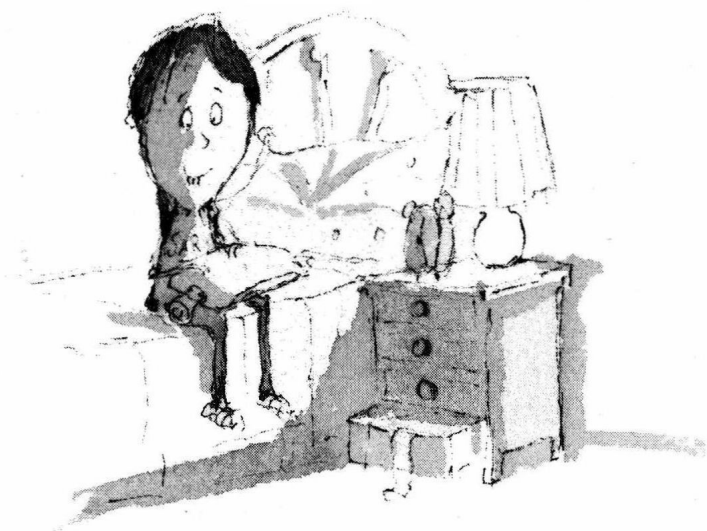
The title 'THE GREYKS' is rendered in a highly stylized, gothic font. The letters 'G', 'R', 'E', and 'K' are filled with a cross-hatched or scale-like pattern. The 'S' at the end of 'GREYKS' is a large, flowing, decorative flourish. Below the main title, the text 'at No. 55' is written in a simpler, bold, sans-serif font. The number '55' is particularly large and prominent. A vertical column of three small, stylized eyes or faces is positioned between the '5' and the first '5' of '55', extending downwards from the top of the '5'.

There were four drawers in Petronella Morton's bedside cabinet. Three were as dull as school, one was extra special with a secret hidden inside. Nelly, as she much preferred to be called, knelt down excitedly in front of drawer number four and slowly eased it open.

Her eyes dropped inside and fell upon the crisp clean folds of a freshly ironed pair of blue and pink stripy pyjamas. She lifted the pyjamas up slightly, counted four jumpers down and then slipped her fingers into the fold beneath. A spark ignited in both her eyes as her fingers withdrew the secret from its hiding place. She lay it on her lap, paused for a moment and then stroked it lovingly with the tips of her fingers.

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It was a lime green hot-water bottle. *Made in Taiwan. Do not overfill.*



Nelly cradled it in her lap for a moment and then opened the flat end of the water bottle like a pitta bread. Unbeknown to her family, she had changed the use of the water bottle entirely by slicing open the widest end with a craft knife, creating a secret cavity inside.

She slipped her fingers into the cavity and pulled out her pride and joy. It was an A4

The Grerks at Number 55

pad, spiral bound. The plain red cover had been transformed by the addition of a large handwritten title rendered with silver and gold glitter pens. The title of the book read: *Nelly the Monster Sitter's Secret Monster Sitting Notebook* (in gold) – ***KEEP OUT OR ELSE*** (double underlined in silver, three exclamation marks – !!!).

Nelly's secret monster-sitting notebook was for Nelly's eyes only. Not that Nelly was a secretive girl. Indeed she shared nearly all of her innermost thoughts with her family (not including her sister Astilbe). She had simply learnt that some of the things that she saw when she went monster sitting were best kept to herself. You know – gunky, slimy, spiky stuff that other people can find scary or hair raising.

Monster sitting was Nelly's special thing. None of her friends would ever dare baby sit for a family of monsters, or even knock on a monster's front door. Just about everyone Nelly knew, including her twin sister Asti (as she much preferred to be

Nelly the Monster Sitter

called), thought that monsters were freaks to be avoided rather than neighbours to be welcomed. But then Nelly wasn't like most other children. Or people for that matter.

She had a heart the size of an air balloon and nerves as steady as an oil rig.

Thankfully for Nelly, her mum and dad were generous spirited too. From day one, they had been totally fine with Nelly's idea of helping monsters to get out of the house a little bit more. Nelly's dad was of the mind that baby sitting for



The Grerks at Number 55

monsters would be 'educational'. Nelly's mum was hoping it might help Nelly with her table manners. For sure, Nelly was lucky to have parents like Clifford and Yvonne Morton.

She opened her secret notebook and flicked randomly past some pages headed in her own handwriting 'HOJPOGS' 'WIZZILS' and 'GLOOBLES'. She found the next empty page and pulled the lid off a gel pen with her teeth. At the top of the page, in her best purple, she wrote the heading 'GRERKS' and then followed it with three dots.

Three dots meant 'more info later'.

Nelly was pencilled into her diary to monster sit later that evening. She had never monster sat a Grerk before and it wouldn't be until she returned home later that evening that she would be able to complete her notes.

She knew what Grerks sounded like over the telephone, in fact she had mistaken their squeaking squawks for a Squiddl. But as for appearances? Were they scaly, were they spiky or

Nelly the Monster Sitter

slimy or furry? For Nelly, half the fun was guessing, the other half was finding out.

The Grerks from number 55 had asked Nelly if she could monster sit from six until eight that evening. It was twenty to six already, and Nelly hadn't even sat down for her tea. She slipped



The Greks at Number 55

her secret notebook back into its water bottle and placed it carefully back into the drawer. She was pushing the drawer shut, when the handle on her bedroom door began to twist, rattle and shake.

‘Why have you locked it?’ shouted her sister from the other side of Nelly’s bedroom door.

‘So Barbies can’t get in,’ shouted Nelly, who most days of the week didn’t get on with her sister much, and the other days of the week didn’t get on with her at all.

‘Let me in now or I’ll tell Mum!’ shouted Asti.

Nelly ignored her sister’s protests and opened the door of her wardrobe instead. She took out her favourite, coolest sweat shirt and laid it on the bed. It was purple with an orange trim and it had the word *sardine* transfer printed across the chest in big swirly silver letters. No one, including Nelly, understood why the word *sardine* had been printed on the sweat shirt. But that was precisely why Nelly liked it. Because it was different.

As she tied back her liquorice black hair with

Nelly the Monster Sitter

a yellow scrunchie, the bedroom door handle rattled furiously again.

‘Let me IN!’ squawked Asti.

Nelly smiled, opened the door and barged past her sister.

‘Freak lover,’ said Asti.

‘Bog tentacle,’ said Nelly.

Asti placed her hands on her hips and glared at the back of Nelly’s purple sweat shirt as it breezed past her in the direction of the stairs. She wasn’t as quick thinking as Nelly and needed time to upgrade her next insult. The words *Smelly*, *Freako* and *Weirdo* bandied about in her brain, but by the time she had hit upon ‘Gunge lover’, Nelly had disappeared from view.

As usual Nelly was ten steps ahead of her sister. She bounced down the stairs and wheeled towards the kitchen in the faint hope that tea might be ready and waiting for her on the table. But as usual, a bottle of tomato sauce was the only thing on offer.

Mealtime had never been a simple affair in