

Lodgings Available - £40 per week

Nice room in pleasant family house
Meals and laundry included
Suit clean, tidy, quiet student

Please write to: Mrs Elizabeth Pennykettle, 42 Wayward Crescent, Scrabbley

PS Must like children and cats

and dragons...

David soon discovers the dragons
when he moves in with Liz and Lucy.
The pottery models fill up every
spare space in the house!

Only when David is given his own
special dragon does he begin
to unlock their mysterious
secrets, and to discover
the fire within.

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Times Educational Supplement

Chris d'Lacey's *Fly, Cherokee, Fly* was
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ISBN 1-84121-533-3



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A PAPERBACK ORIGINAL

The Fire Within

Chris d'Lacey

Welcome to Wayward Crescent

"Well, here we are," Mrs Pennykettle said, pausing by the door of the room she had for rent. She clasped her hands together and smiled. "Officially, it's our dining room, but we always eat in the kitchen these days."

The young man beside her nodded politely and patiently adjusted his shoulder bag. "Lovely. Erm, shall we take a look...?"

"It used to be our junk room, really," said a voice.

Mrs Pennykettle clucked like a hen.

The visitor turned. A young girl was lolling in the kitchen doorway. She was dressed in jeans and a sloppy top and had wet grass sticking to the heels of her trainers. "All our rammel's in the attic now."

"And where have *you* been?" Mrs Pennykettle said.

"In the garden," said the girl, "looking for Conker."

"Conkers?" the young man queried. "Aren't you a week or two early for them?"

"Not *ers*," said the girl, "*er*."

The visitor furrowed his brow.

Mrs Pennykettle sighed and did the introductions: "David, this is Lucy, my daughter. I'm afraid she comes

as part of the package. Lucy, this is David. He's here to see the room."

Lucy chewed a wisp of her straw-coloured hair and slowly looked the visitor up and down.

Her mother tried again: "We've done the room out as best we can. There's a table in the corner, with a study lamp, of course, and a wardrobe we bought from a second-hand shop. The bed's not brilliant, but you should be all right if you try to avoid the loose spring in the middle."

"Mum?"

"What?"

"Why don't you stop twittering and *show* him?" With a huff, Lucy stomped down the hall to join them. "She's not always like this," she said to David. "It's because we've never had a lodger before." Before her mother could "twitter" in protest, Lucy reached out and pushed the door open. David smiled graciously and stepped inside. The fresh smell of lavender wafted through the room, mingled with the peaceful tinkle of wind chimes. Everything was perfect, exactly as described. Except...

"What's that?" David pointed to a bulge in the bed.

Elizabeth Pennykettle groaned with embarrassment. She swept across the room and dived beneath the folds of the red patterned duvet.

"That's Bonnington, our cat," Lucy said, grinning. "He likes getting under things – newspapers, duvets, all sorts of stuff. Mum says he's always getting under her feet."

David smiled and put down his bag. "Bonnington. That's a really good name for a cat."

Lucy nodded in agreement. "Mum named him after a mountain climber. I don't know why; he couldn't climb a beanbag. Well, he *could*, but we don't have one. He mistakes the sound of the beans for cat litter, then he poos on there instead of in his tray."

"Lovely," said David, glancing anxiously at the duvet.

With a rake of claws against fresh bed linen, Mrs Pennykettle emerged clutching a brown tabby cat. Her curls of red hair, now in total disarray, resembled a rather bedraggled mop. She grimaced in apology, plonked Bonnington on the windowsill and bundled him ungracefully into the garden.

David moved the conversation on. "Are there buses to the college from here?"

"Loads," said Lucy.

"Three an hour," her mother confirmed, hastily replumping her hair. "And there's room in the shed for a bike, if you have one. If you were stuck, you could always have a lift into town in my car – as long as you don't mind sharing with the dragons."