

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

'SOMETHING sticking out of the ground,' Mr Cave replied. 'Pointed it was, and silver and very, very smooth. Made of metal.'

Ruskin leaned forward.

'Like a giant silver fish head?' asked Ruskin.

Mrs Cave continued the story.

'That's right,' she said, puffing her cigar and flicking ash on to the end of the bed. 'It was something from the war and very dangerous.'

'A bomb?' Ruskin said.

'A bomb it was,' said Dr Flowers. 'Only Corky didn't know it was a ... TISHOO! ... bomb at the time, so he jumped on it and ... TISHOO! ... and it started ticking.'

Ruskin gasped.



'But that means,' Ruskin said breathlessly, 'if Corky was to move, the bomb would have exploded.'

'Precisely,' said Mr Flick, continuing the story. 'Luckily someone heard the ticking and yelled to Corky to keep still.'

'So Corky kept still?' Ruskin said.

'He kept very still,' said Mr Lace, sucking a pencil.

'He kept the stillest he'd ever been,' said Mrs Walnut, her potato smell getting stronger.

'He kept still for hours and hours,' said Dr Flowers, pinching his nose to ward off another sneeze.

'He kept still until some experts came and defused the bomb,' said Mr Cave, puffing his cigar. 'Didn't he, Mrs Cave?'

'He did, Mr Cave,' said Mrs Cave, puffing her cigar.

Ruskin was so engrossed with the story that he pushed the covers off him and stood up on his bed.

'So that's why he got a medal!' cried Ruskin, bouncing up and down on his mattress.

Later, after everyone had gone, Ruskin lay in bed and thought about the story.

Corky had saved Lizard Street.

He had saved Lizard Street all by himself.

He was a hero!

And now it was Ruskin's turn.

Now he had to protect Lizard Street too. Protect it from the thing that cracked the pavement, scorched the brickwork and dug holes in the road.

Ruskin knew what he had to do.

That night, while Lizard Street slept, he would tame Krindlekrax.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

DARKNESS.

Darkness and silence.

Night-time on Lizard Street.

Ruskin got out of bed and put his ear to the wall. He could hear his mum and dad snoring and mumbling in their sleep.

'It's not my fault!' his dad was saying.

'Polly-wolly-doodle-all-the-day,' his mum was saying.

Ruskin got dressed, then put on the tin helmet and turned the torch on. The beam of light shot through the gloom and illuminated the photographs of actors on the wall opposite.

Ruskin picked up the pin that had been on the medal and put it in his pocket. Then he picked

up the walking stick, waving it in the air like a sword.

'Now . . . unto the breach!' Ruskin said, looking at himself in the mirror.

His red frizzy hair stood out beneath the helmet and his arms and legs weren't much thicker than the walking stick.

Perhaps I don't look like a hero, Ruskin thought. But only I can save Lizard Street from the cracking and scorching and digging of Krindlekrax.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

RUSKIN crept downstairs and went into the kitchen. The kitchen table was covered with piles of toast.

As quietly as he could, Ruskin picked up some toast, opened the street door and went out into Lizard Street.

The moon was full, illuminating the street with a ghostly blue light. The sky was clear and gleaming with stars.

Ruskin went up to the metal drain and started to lay a trail of toast, leading away from the drain and down the street towards the school.

He had to make several journeys back to his home because, at the end of the line, he wanted a pile of toast, to act as bait for Krindlekrax.