

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

RUSKIN screamed.
The water was alive with rats. Fat, dark rats, with red eyes, long pink tails and vicious claws.

The rats swam in the water and, as they swam, so they carried the walking stick with them.

Ruskin followed.

Deeper and deeper into the sewer.

He had never been this alone before. He'd always been in the bustle of Lizard Street and – even when Elvis and Sparkey stopped being his friends and he thought he was alone, he wasn't really – he'd always had Mr and Mrs Cave and Mrs Walnut and Mr Flick and Mr Lace and Dr Flowers and his mum and dad and, of course, Corky.



But now . . .

Now there was no one!

Just darkness and water and hundreds of rats carrying the walking stick further and further into the labyrinth of darkness.

Perhaps I'll never find my way out, Ruskin thought. Perhaps I'll have to stay here forever.

Suddenly, the rats climbed out of the water and, one at a time, disappeared into a rat-hole in the brick ledge.

The rats tried to take the walking stick with them, but the curve of the handle was too big to go through.

When all the rats had gone into the hole, Ruskin rushed up and grabbed hold of the stick.

He pulled.

It was stuck!

He pulled harder.

Still stuck!

I haven't come all this way to give up now, he thought.

He pulled again.

Still stuck!!

Ruskin stood up straight, took a deep breath, then spat on his hands and rubbed them together.

He grabbed hold of the walking stick.

'This one's for Corky!' he cried.

And pulled as hard as he could.

Squelch! went the walking stick, coming out of the hole.

But the force of Ruskin's tug was so strong that, still holding the stick, he toppled and fell backwards into the water.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

SLIMY green water went up his nose and into his ears.

Ruskin coughed and spluttered.

Fortunately, the water wasn't that deep and only came up to Ruskin's knees.

He stood there for a while, clutching the walking stick.

And then he thought of something.

I must smell of toast, Ruskin thought. So why hasn't Krindlekrax come after me? Perhaps Krindlekrax doesn't exist. Perhaps it was just a story, after all. Just like his mum had said. Nothing but a story.

He couldn't help feeling relieved at the thought of it.

Ruskin started to laugh and splash about in the water.

'A story!' he cried. And his voice echoed round him. 'A story . . . story . . . story . . . story . . . ory . . . y . . . y . . .'

And he called again. Louder this time.

'STORY . . . STORY! STORY! STORY! Story! . . . ory . . . ory . . . y . . . y . . . y . . .'

But this time his echoes were interrupted by another sound.

A roar like a million car brakes screeching all at once.

'RAAAAAAHHHHHHH!'

Ruskin froze.

He heard the sound of splashing getting closer.

Waves appeared in the water.

'RAAAAAAHHHHHHH!' went the roar again.

Ruskin started to run.

The roars got louder and louder.

It was Krindlekrax!

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

'RAAAAAAHHHHHHH!'
Ruskin could feel hot air on the back of his neck.

'RAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!'
Ruskin reached the ladder and started to climb.

His feet slipped on the rungs a few times, but he still managed to get to the surface.

He ran down Lizard Street and hid behind the pile of toast.

He stared at the hole in the road.

Don't be scared, Ruskin thought. This is what I wanted to happen. This is what I hoped for. To come face to face with the monster. This is the only way. I should be pleased.

He clutched the walking stick as tightly as he could.

Be brave! he thought.

Suddenly, mustering all his courage, he jumped on top of the pile of toast and, waving the walking stick in the air, cried, 'I'm ready for you, monster!'

And that's when Krindlekrax appeared.

CHAPTER FIFTY

A CLAW.

A gleaming, black, sharp claw.

Then another claw.

And another . . .

Until a whole leg came to the surface.

A dark green, scaly leg, dripping with slime.

Then another claw.

A gleaming, black, sharp claw.

Then another.

Until a second dark green, scaly leg came to the surface.

Ruskin was so scared he couldn't move. He felt as if his feet were stuck to the toast. He wondered if the congealed butter had hardened round the soles of his boots, trapping him. Then he realized