

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

THE STREET was empty except for Ruskin and Elvis.

There was a crack of thunder and lightning, and the rain suddenly poured down.

It felt cool and refreshing and Ruskin stared up at the sky and let the rain splash over his face.

Then Ruskin looked at the pub sign.

Eeeek!

'And Corky is my friend,' said Ruskin, rain bubbling between his lips, 'even if he's not here any more.'

CHAPTER SIXTY

AND, AS Ruskin said this, so the rain washed away the peeling paint of the sign, erasing the baby crocodile.

Ruskin glanced at Elvis.

'You can stay out in the rain,' he said. 'I'm going to bed.'

Ruskin put the drain cover back on the drain, then went into his house and up to his bedroom.

He got into bed and closed his eyes.

The last thing he heard before he fell asleep was Elvis trying to bounce his football in the rain.

Da-splash-boinggg!

Da-splash-boinggg!

Da-splash-boinggg!

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

WAKE up!

Ruskin opened his eyes to see Wendy standing beside his bed with a plate of toast and a cup of tea.

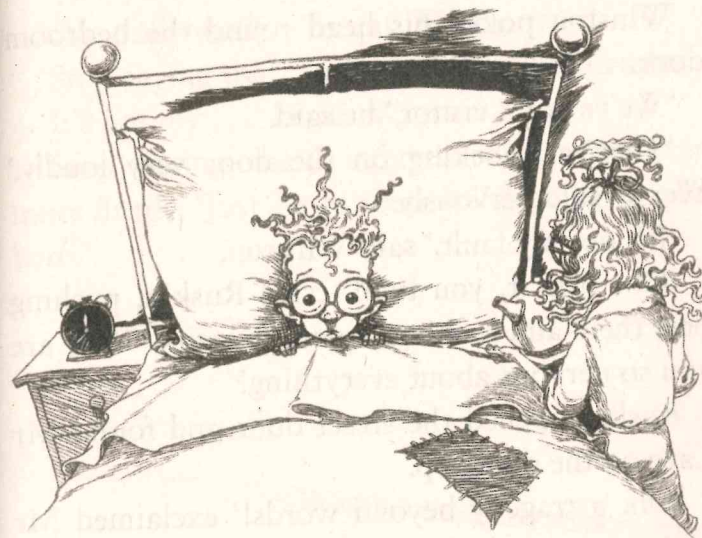
'I've been trying to wake you for ages,' Wendy said, putting the tea and toast on Ruskin's bedside table. 'How are you feeling?'

'Fine, thank you,' replied Ruskin, eating the toast.

'You're not going to stay in bed again?' his mum asked.

'Certainly not,' Ruskin said, jumping out of bed. 'It's a beautiful day.'

'Yes,' said Wendy. 'It rained during the night and it's a lot cooler now.'



Ruskin sipped some tea, then said, 'Besides, it's the school play today. I want to see how Elvis plays the hero. You know, Elvis is still my friend, even though he doesn't want to be.'

'That's what you were saying in your sleep,' Wendy said. 'You were saying Elvis is your friend and Mr Flick is your friend and ...'

She was interrupted by someone knocking at the front door.

'Who can that be?' asked Wendy nervously. Then added, 'Polly-wolly-doodle-all-the-day.'

Winston poked his head round the bedroom door.

'We've got a visitor,' he said.

'They're knocking on the door very loudly,' Wendy said nervously.

'It's not my fault,' said Winston.

'Oh, stop it, you two!' cried Ruskin, pushing past them and rushing down the stairs. 'Why are you so nervous about everything?'

Ruskin opened the street door and found Mr Lace on the doorstep.

'Oh, a tragedy beyond words!' exclaimed Mr Lace, running his fingers through his hair and sucking a pencil.

'What's happened?' asked Ruskin.

'Elvis was sleepwalking in the rain last night,' cried Mr Lace. 'He's caught a terrible cold and can't do the play any more. You're the only person who knows the lines!' Mr Lace grabbed Ruskin's hands and squeezed them tightly. 'Please play the part,' he begged. 'We need you.'

'I'd love to,' said Ruskin casually. Then, looking back at Wendy and Winston who were hiding at the top of the stairs, called, 'Get dressed, you two! You're coming to school to see me do a bit of acting.'

'Oh, polly-wolly -' began Wendy.

'Stop saying that,' interrupted Ruskin firmly.

'It's not my ...' began Winston.

'Stop saying that,' interrupted Ruskin even more firmly. 'Just get to school. I'm going to be a hero.'