

It was getting dark outside.

Clutching the medal tightly, Ruskin walked down Lizard Street towards his home.

He looked at the cracks in the pavement and the holes in the road and the dark bricks, and imagined Krindlekrax walking up and down Lizard Street – its huge tail cracking, its sharp claws digging, its hot breath scorching – looking for Corky Pigeon. He imagined Krindlekrax looking in through windows, peeping through curtains, watching people sleep and dream. Perhaps Krindlekrax had even seen him – Ruskin Splinter – curled up in his bed, and wondered who this small, thin, red-haired boy was, sleeping contentedly in a room full of actors' photographs.

Ruskin stood on the large drain in front of his house. The metal drain-cover wobbled from side to side,

Ka-clunk! went the drain-cover.

Ruskin thought, This is the largest drain in Lizard Street. It's from this drain that Krindlekrax rises when he's searching for Corky.

Ruskin got to his knees and put his ear to the cold metal. He listened as hard as he could.

For a while he heard nothing. And then ... then he heard it!

A distant rumbling.

The drain started to vibrate.

The rumbling got louder and louder.

So loud, Ruskin's knees started to tremble.

It was Krindlekrax! Down there in the sewer, it was stomping through endless corridors of water, through chambers as large as cathedrals and waterfalls as high as mountains.

Ruskin got to his feet, brushed the dust from his knees, then looked up at his house. He noticed the window Elvis had smashed that morning had been covered with a sheet of newspaper. Nearly all the windows were paper instead of glass now.

Ruskin went inside.

His mum and dad were sitting at the kitchen table, eating baked beans on toast. His dad, Winston, was still in his pyjama bottoms and a white vest with holes in. The front of the vest was thick with baked-bean and marmalade and egg stains.

'Kiss,' Wendy said.

Ruskin kissed her cheek.

'Tea?' she asked.

'Yes please,' replied Ruskin.

'Beans on toast?'

'Yes please.'

Every evening Wendy said 'Kiss', followed by 'Tea?' then 'Beans on toast?' (or poached egg or scrambled egg or fried egg), and every evening Ruskin kissed her cheek and said 'Yes please' to both questions.

Ruskin sat at the table.

Winston's eyes were glued to the television set in the



corner of the room. Someone on the screen was talking about the weather: 'It's the hottest summer ever. Lawns are turning brown, flowers are drying up and we're running out of water ...'

Ruskin said, 'I wish we didn't have newspaper in our windows.'

'We can't afford to keep replacing the windows,' Winston said, still staring at the television. 'Now the worst thing Elvis can do is rip paper instead of smashing glass.'

'But it looks silly, Dad.'

'It's not my fault.'

'Oh, polly-wolly-doodle-all-the-day,' Wendy said, handing Ruskin some tea and putting some bread in the toaster. 'Don't make such a fuss.'

'You should get Elvis's dad to pay for it,' Ruskin remarked. 'Why don't you go and speak to him?'

'I don't want to speak to Elvis's dad,' Winston insisted. 'Not now or ever! Besides, don't forget my motto: "Don't interfere".'

Wendy poured Ruskin a cup of tea and asked, 'Did you get the part of the hero in the school play?'

'No,' Ruskin replied.

'I said you wouldn't,' Wendy said. 'Fancy thinking a small, thin, red-haired boy like you with a squeaky whisper of a voice could pass for a handsome, tall, muscular, thunderous-voiced hero.'

The toast popped out of the toaster. Wendy buttered it, poured some baked beans on top and handed it to Ruskin.

'We have toast with everything,' Ruskin said.

'I love toast,' Wendy said ecstatically.

'But we can't eat all of it,' Ruskin said, looking at his meal. 'I mean, what happens to all the toast left over?'

'I throw it away,' Wendy said, staring at the television set.

The person on the television was saying, '... paint is peeling, walls are cracking, people are getting sunstroke, drains are smelling ...'

Ruskin asked, 'Where do you throw all the toast?'

'Down the drain of course,' Wendy replied.

Ruskin looked at his mum. The light from the television set reflected in her eyes, making them look like car headlights.

'Have you always thrown our uneaten toast down the drain?' he asked.

'Always,' Wendy replied.

'The drain outside?'

'Of course,' Wendy said. 'After all, it's the biggest drain in Lizard Street.'

Ruskin ate the rest of his meal in silence. Afterwards he went up to his room and sat by the window.

Now he knew why the baby crocodile had grown so big. Corky said that it had been eating toast when he first saw it. And that's what it had continued to do. For ten years. A daily diet of toast and butter, toast and marmalade, toast and baked beans, toast and poached egg (or scrambled egg or fried egg). And the toast had made the crocodile big and strong, had given it a tail and sharp claws and fiery breath, had transformed it from a tiny, bright-green baby, no bigger than a shoe, into a gigantic, dark monster that drained the colour from Corky's hair and nightly damaged Lizard Street.

'I'm going to sit here all night,' Ruskin said, looking out of the window. 'I'm going to stay awake and wait for Krindlekrax.'