

'So . . . you left your job. Right, Corky?' Ruskin asked.

Corky nodded, saying, 'Yes. I left, my dear boy. I got a job at St George's School. Where you and I became friends, so I can't complain too much.'

Ruskin smiled.

'But I'll tell you something,' Corky continued. 'Some nights I know that Krindlekrax comes up through the largest drain in Lizard Street. I know it comes up and searches for me. And shall I tell you how I know?'

'How?' Ruskin asked.

'Because its heavy tail cracks the pavement, and its fiery breath scorches the bricks dark, and its claws put bumps and holes in the road. That's how I know.'

'But . . . it's never . . . found you,' Ruskin said nervously.

'No,' Corky replied, wrapping the old newspaper round the tin helmet. 'And it never will.'

'Oh, don't let it,' Ruskin cried, getting to his feet and hugging Corky. 'Don't let it get you. You're the only friend I've got.'

'There, there, my dear boy,' Corky said, holding Ruskin very tight. 'Don't upset yourself. I'll never let Krindlekrax get me. I bolt all my doors and lock my windows and tuck myself in tight when I go to bed. I'm as safe as houses.'

'If . . . if I ever see Krindlekrax,' Ruskin said, 'I'll tame him so you'll be safe for ever.'



'None of us is safe for ever,' Corky said. 'We can only be safe for little whiles at a time.'

Ruskin was still clutching Corky's golden medal in his hand.

'I'm still curious about this,' Ruskin said. 'Tell me why you got the medal.'

'Not now,' Corky said. 'That's enough stories for one night.'

'Is it anything to do with Krindlekrax?' Ruskin asked.

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'No,' Corky replied.

'Is it anything -?' began Ruskin.

'It doesn't matter,' interrupted Corky. 'Now you get yourself home, my dear boy. Your mum and dad will be worried.'