

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

RUSKIN stared down the length of Lizard Street. One by one the lights in windows (what windows were still unsmashed by Elvis's ball) went out and people went to bed.

Ruskin knew the street so well. He looked at Mr Lace's house with its window box full of marigolds. He looked at Dr Flowers's house, from where came the sound of the hay-fevered doctor sneezing in his sleep, 'TISHOO! TISHOO! TISHOO!' He looked at Sparkey Walnut's house, where, no doubt, Mrs Walnut hoped her shop window would not be broken again by a sleepwalking Elvis. He looked at Corky's house where Corky was tucked up tightly, his windows locked, doors bolted, protecting himself from Krindlekrax. He looked at the pub,

The Dragon and the Golden Penny, where Mr and Mrs Cave smoked endless cigars and Elvis lay in bed, his ball cradled in his arms. And he looked at the school at the other end of the street. The school, with its turrets and railings, was like a gigantic castle against the moonlit, star-filled sky.

Ruskin took the medal from his pocket.

There was a pin attached to the medal so it could be pinned on the owner. The medal gleamed in the moonlight.

The light reflected in Ruskin's eyes and made him feel tired.

Ruskin closed his eyes for a while . . .

He must have fallen asleep because, suddenly, he heard a noise and jumped up.

At first he thought it was Krindlekrax.

Then he realized it wasn't.

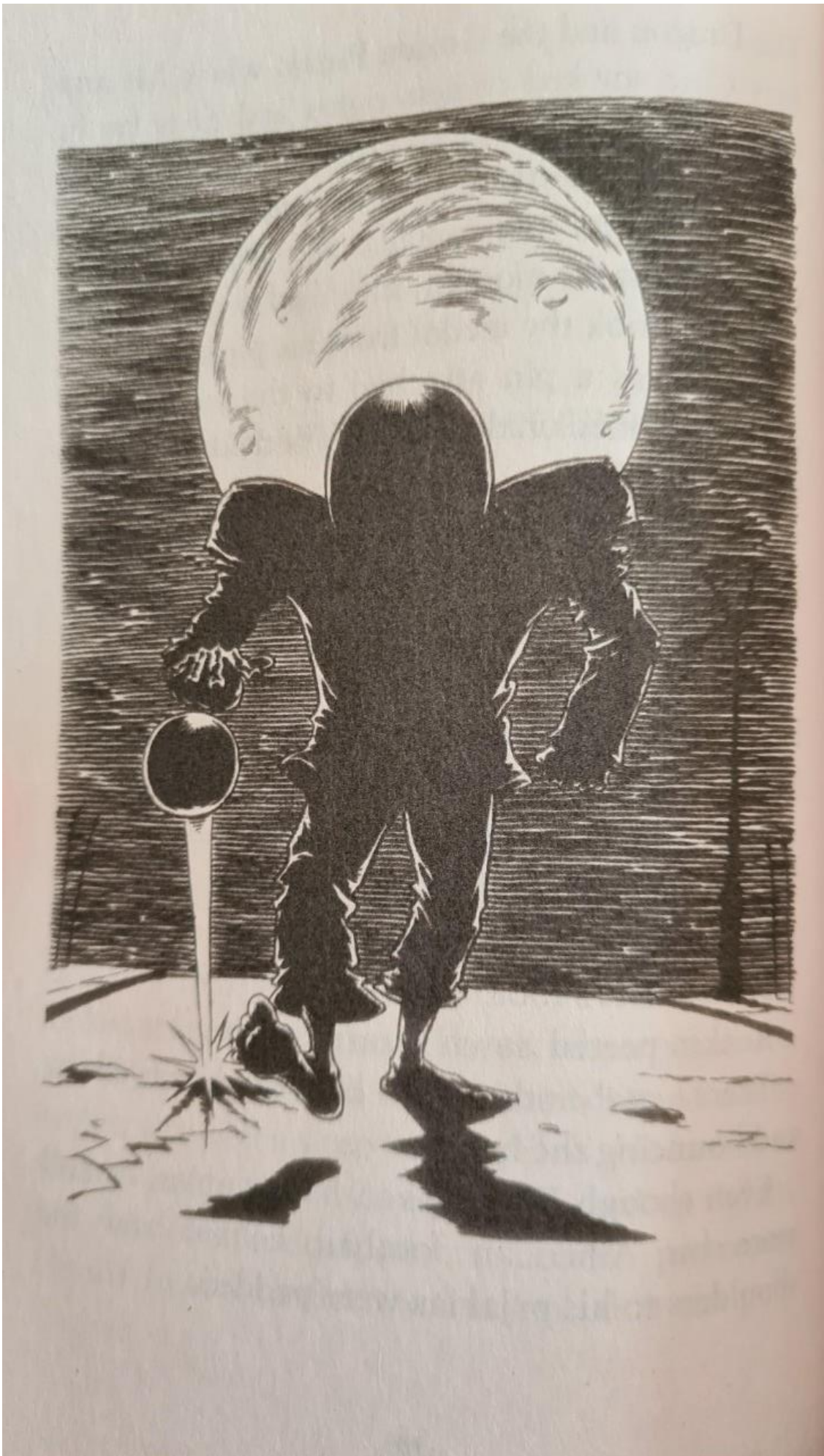
Da-boinggg! went the noise.

It was Elvis's football.

Ruskin peered down Lizard Street.

There - at the other end - Elvis was sleepwalking and bouncing the ball.

Even though Elvis was in his pyjamas, he still wore his American football helmet and the shoulders to his pyjamas were padded.



The moonlight made Elvis's shadow very long. It ran down the whole length of Lizard Street.

Da-boinggg! went the ball.

It was the only sound in Lizard Street and it echoed from building to building.

What a nasty boy you are, thought Ruskin, watching Elvis. You grow three times as big and steal my ball and you smash all our windows.

Suddenly, the ball struck a bump in the road and bounced off at an angle.

The ball hit Mr Lace's window.

SMASH! went the window.

One by one, the windows of Lizard Street lit up as people struggled out of bed.

The first on the street was Mr Lace.

Although he was wearing a long white night-shirt, he still had his scarf round his neck and pencils in his hair. There was a pencil in his mouth as well, confirming the rumour that Mr Lace sucked a pencil in his sleep like babies suck a dummy.

'My window!' cried Mr Lace, waving his hands in the air.

Then he looked at the window boxes. A few of the marigolds had been damaged by the ball.

'My flowers!' Mr Lace cried. 'My beautiful flowers!'

Other people were in the street now.

Mr Flick in his emerald green dressing gown with a velvet collar, Mrs Walnut in an olive green, potato-smelling dressing gown, Mr and Mrs Cave still smoking cigars, Dr Flowers with paper handkerchiefs stuck to his face. They all stood round Mr Lace and tried to comfort him as he bemoaned the state of his window boxes.

'It's terrible,' said Mr Flick.

'Outrageous,' said Mrs Walnut.

'Disgraceful,' said Dr Flowers. 'TISHOO!'

'You're lucky,' Mrs Walnut said. 'He's broken my shop window six times now.'

'And my window seven times,' said Mr Flick.

Ruskin's mum and dad were peering from behind their front door.

'He keeps breaking our windows too!' called Wendy.

'Shhh,' said Winston, closing the door. 'Don't interfere!'

Mr Cave put his arms round Elvis and said, 'Look how innocent he is! He doesn't even know what he's doing.'

'My poor little Elvy-baby,' said Mrs Cave.

Everyone in the street stared at Elvis.

'Now then,' Mr Cave said, 'give him his ball back. Otherwise he'll be upset in the morning and you wouldn't want that to happen. You know how many windows Elvis smashes when he gets upset.'

Mr Lace bit a pencil in half and went inside to get Elvis's ball.

'It's terrible,' sighed Mr Flick.

'Outrageous!' gasped Mrs Walnut.

'Disgraceful,' exclaimed Dr Flowers. 'TISHOO!'

Mr Lace returned with the ball and gave it to Elvis.

As soon as it was in Elvis's hands, he started to bounce it.

Da-boinggg!

Mr and Mrs Cave led Elvis back to the pub and locked the door.

The people of Lizard Street looked at each other in silence for a while. Then they shrugged their shoulders, sighed, and went to bed. All except Mr Lace, that is. He got a broom and started sweeping the broken glass.

Corky came out of his house and helped Mr Lace sweep the glass into a bin bag.

'He's a nuisance, that boy,' Mr Lace said, wiping tears from his eyes.

'Even in his sleep he scares us,' said Corky.

Once all the glass was swept away, Mr Lace went into his house and locked the door.

Corky stood alone in the street for a while.

He glanced up and saw Ruskin sitting in his window.

Corky waved his stick in the air.

Ruskin waved back.

Corky went inside and locked his door.

Ruskin sat for a while, waiting for Krindlekrax.

But, gradually, weariness overcame him and he knew he had to go to bed.

He changed into his pyjamas (green and white striped), looked at the golden medal, then closed the window.

'Goodnight, Lizard Street,' he said.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE NEXT morning in school, rehearsals started on the play, *Young Hal Oaktree* (Hal Oaktree is the name of the hero).

Elvis, holding a plastic sword and shield (and clutching his football under his arm) stood in front of the cardboard-and-chicken-wire dragon.

Mr Lace watched from behind the piano.

'All right,' Mr Lace said. 'Begin your speech, Elvis.'

Elvis took a deep breath.

'Oh, you terrible monster,' Elvis began in a voice that, despite being loud and thunderous, was flat and emotionless. 'You scary thing of . . . you scary thing of . . . the . . . the . . .'

Elvis had forgotten his lines.

'Dark,' prompted Mr Lace.

'Dark!' Elvis exclaimed. 'You scary thing of the dark. You will scare us no . . . no . . . no . . .' Elvis had forgotten his lines again.

'No more,' Mr Lace prompted.

'No more!' Elvis exclaimed. 'You will scare us no more. I am not . . . not . . .'

'Afraid,' Mr Lace prompted.

'Afraid!' Elvis exclaimed. 'I am not afraid. I . . . I . . .' Elvis's voice trailed into silence.

Mr Lace came out from behind the piano.

'Oh well,' he said to Elvis. 'You'll be all right once you've learned the lines, I suppose.'

Elvis put down his sword and shield and started bouncing the ball.

Da-boinggg!

Da-boinggg!

'I'm going to be the best actor in the world,' Elvis said.

'Yes,' Mr Lace said, sucking a pencil. 'The whole class thinks that. Don't we class?'

Everyone in the class said, 'Yes, Mr Lace.'

Everyone except Ruskin, that is.

'Ruskin didn't say "yes",' Elvis said.

Mr Lace looked at Ruskin.

'Oh, but I'm sure he meant to say "yes",' Mr Lace said. 'Didn't you mean to say "yes", Ruskin?'



'No,' Ruskin replied. 'I didn't.'

'You didn't?' Mr Lace said.

'No,' Ruskin said. 'I think Elvis is the worst actor I've ever seen. He's just saying the words, but he's not feeling anything. I didn't believe a word of it.'

Silence.

Mr Lace stared at Ruskin.

Elvis bounced the ball.

Da-boinggg!

'What's more,' Ruskin continued, 'he doesn't know how to hold a shield and sword properly.'

'Oh dear,' Mr Lace said.

Da-boinggg!

'And he doesn't know how to breathe properly,' Ruskin continued.

'Oh dear,' said Mr Lace.

Elvis was trembling with anger now.

Da-boinggg!

Da-boinggg!

'And he doesn't speak properly,' Ruskin said.

The sound of the bouncing ball got louder and louder.

DA-BOINGGG!

DA-BOINGGG!

'And,' Ruskin continued, 'he wouldn't know good acting if it wore a taffeta dress and stood on a desk, screaming "I'M GOOD ACTING".'

DA-BOINGGG!

The ball bounced up to the ceiling, struck a light bulb, and went straight through a window.

SMASH! went the window.

Elvis pointed at Ruskin and growled. 'You're not going to get away with that, you silly little

Splinter. I'm going to smash your living-room windows, your bathroom windows, your hallway windows. I'm even going to smash the glass in your silly glasses. I'm going to smash so much glass round you, you're not going to be able to walk without crunching.'

'Now now,' said Mr Lace, trying to calm Elvis down. 'No need to get offensive -'

'SHAKESPEARE!' Elvis snapped.

Tears came into Mr Lace's eyes.

'Oh, that wondrous name,' Mr Lace said. 'The Bard of all time.'

'SHAKESPEARE!' said Elvis.

Mr Lace fell to his knees.

'Oh, the joy of the thought,' he said, wiping tears from his eyes. 'The fountains of emotion contained in that single name.'

'SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE!' Elvis continued.

Mr Lace was lying on his back on the floor now, weeping so much his scarf became soggy with tears.

'I'm going to get my football now,' Elvis said, suddenly tired of tormenting Mr Lace.

Elvis left the classroom.