

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE NEXT day, going home after working at the zoo, Winston sneaked into the reptile house.

He walked past the snakes and the turtles and the salamanders, and went up to the glass tank containing the baby crocodile.

The crocodile was sitting on a piece of wood floating in water. It had pointed teeth and sharp claws and stared at Winston with bright red eyes.

Winston took the lid off the glass tank and put his hand inside.

Clack! went the crocodile's jaws, snapping at Winston's fingers.

Winston withdrew his hand.

He was scared, but knew he had to get the crocodile, otherwise Mr Cave wouldn't be his friend.

He put his hand inside the tank for a second time.  
Clack-clack!

Winston withdrew his hand again. He was shaking all over.

'I know I'm scared,' Winston said to himself. 'But I've got to do scary things to get a friend.'

So he took a deep breath and, whispering 'Third time lucky', put his hand in the tank and grabbed the crocodile by its tail.

Clack-clack-clack!

Winston stared at the crocodile as it dangled from his fingertips. Gradually, the creature calmed down and stopped clacking its jaws.

Winston put the crocodile in a canvas bag and ran out of the zoo.

He went straight to the pub and gave the crocodile to Mr Cave.

'Be careful of its teeth,' Winston said. 'It's calm now, but it bites when it's angry.'

Mr Cave took the crocodile and Winston upstairs to where Mrs Cave and Mrs Walnut sat on a sofa talking about what they'd call their impending babies.

Mr Cave put the crocodile on the coffee table.  
'What a darling tail it's got,' commented Mrs  
Cave.

'What cute claws,' commented Mrs Walnut.

'And beautiful little teeth,' commented Mr  
Cave. Then added, 'I'm going to start painting the  
new sign right away. I'll give the crocodile back to  
you first thing in the morning, Winston. Is that  
all right?'

'Fine,' Winston replied, happy someone had  
called him by his first name.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THAT night, Winston was woken by the sound of a siren. He looked out of the window and saw an ambulance outside the pub. Mr Cave and Mrs Walnut were helping Mrs Cave into the back of the ambulance. Mrs Cave was wrapped in a blanket and kept saying, 'I want a cigar! Get me a cigar!'

The ambulance drove away (with Mr and Mrs Cave inside) and Mrs Walnut went back into the pub.

For a while, Winston thought nothing of it. He went back to bed and tried to sleep. Then, all of a sudden, he woke up and sat bolt upright, exclaiming, 'My crocodile!'

Winston rushed out of the house and – still in his pyjamas – ran to the pub as fast as he could.

He knocked on the front door.

'Mrs Walnut!' cried Winston. 'Mrs Walnut!'

He knocked again and again.

Finally, Mrs Walnut opened the door and asked, 'What's wrong?'

'My crocodile, Mrs Walnut!' gasped Winston. 'Is my crocodile safe?'

Mrs Walnut – who had been sleeping – looked surprised.

'Your . . . your *what?*' she asked.

'The crocodile I gave Mr Cave to copy for his pub sign,' explained Winston. 'The crocodile I took from the zoo. Is it safe?'

'Oh . . . goodness!' exclaimed Mrs Walnut, covering her face with her hands. 'Mr Cave did paint the new sign. And then . . . then Mrs Cave went into hospital to have the baby and . . . Mr Cave went with her . . . and I was supposed to keep my eye on the crocodile but . . . I . . . oh dear.'

'You fell asleep!' cried Winston. 'Let me in! Quick!'

They searched the pub, but the crocodile was nowhere to be seen.

All night Winston searched Lizard Street. He looked in rubbish bins, behind drainpipes, under cars, but the baby crocodile had disappeared.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

**I**N THE morning, Wendy found him sitting on the metal drain outside their house. He was covered in dirt and his eyes were swollen with tears.

'The crocodile!' Winston said. 'Where could it have gone?'

Ka-clunk! went the drain.

At that moment Mr Cave walked into Lizard Street. He was smoking the biggest cigar anyone had ever seen.

'I HAVE A SON!' cried Mr Cave, giving cigars to everyone.

Mr Lace got a cigar.

Mr Flick got a cigar.

Mrs Walnut got a cigar.

*Philip Ridley*

Dr Flowers got a cigar.

Even Corky Pigeon (a younger Corky, with darker hair and no walking stick), who was just leaving his home to go to work in the sewers, got a cigar.

Mr Cave shoved a cigar in Winston's mouth.

'I HAVE A SON!' Mr Cave cried again. 'HIS NAME IS ... ELVIS!'