

ALBERT WIGGLE



1

Written by Anna Emm

SOMETHING ROTTEN

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LONDON

CHAPTER 1

From inside The Lemon Shop comes a sneeze so loud that all the birds fly up from the nearby trees. No-one has sneezed inside the dusty old shop for a long time. It had been closed shut, standing all by itself in the middle of the woods, gathering cobwebs.

When the previous lemon monger, Bert Wiggle, died a while ago, he left The Lemon Shop to his nephew, Albert. Albert Wiggle moved into the old shop yesterday. He is allergic to lemons. Thus the loud sneeze.

“Aaaa-tishoo!” Albert sneezes again, almost losing his glasses as they slip off his long, thin nose.

“Who is there?” croaks a voice.

Albert adjusts his glasses and looks around for the owner of the voice. But the room is empty except for cobwebs and dust and broken floorboards.

“Who is there?” he whispers back.

“I asked you first,” the voice croaks again.

Albert scratches his head. The voice sounds as if it is coming from the open window. But the only thing on the window-sill is a spider. It can't be the spider talking, can it?

Albert does NOT like spiders, talking or not.

“Hello?” Albert carefully moves closer to inspect the spider. He leans in ... and...

WHOOSH!!

A long, pink tongue shoots out from nowhere and catches the spider! Albert gets such a fright that he stumbles backwards, tripping over a broken floorboard and landing on his bottom in a cloud of dust. When the dust settles, a big, green blob appears on the window-sill. It appears out of thin air, slowly coming into focus.

It is a frog and it is chewing.

It is the biggest frog Albert has ever seen.

“That spider has been bugging me for two days now,” the frog says, swallowing his snack and licking his green lips. He burps rudely.

Albert stares at the amphibian. “Where did you come from?”

“I was here in the window all along. I just hid myself so that spider would not see me.”

“Really?” Albert asks. “That was some very good camouflaging, for I really did not see...”

“Camouflage is for beginners,” the frog interrupts. “I made myself *invisible*.”

Albert frowns. “You can do that?”

In a poof the frog is gone again. “Of course I can. See?” croaks his voice.

“That is amazing,” Albert says, inspecting the nothingness on the window-sill.

The frog comes into focus again. “Thank you. Now answer my question: Who are you and what are you doing in Bert Wiggle’s shop?”

“My name is Albert Wiggle. I inherited The Lemon Shop from Bert. He was my uncle.”

“Bert Wiggle was the best lemon monger I’ve ever seen,” says the frog. “He used to make the sweetest lemonade, no matter HOW sour the lemons were. You’ve got some big shoes to fill, young man!”

Albert sighs. “I’m not here to fill anyone’s shoes, I’m afraid. I’m allergic to lemons.”

The frog’s protruding eyes grow ever wider. “Allergic to lemons?!”

Albert nods. “And to grass. And to milk. And cows and ostriches and aliens and bubble baths. And to a few other things as well...” He takes out a large white handkerchief and wipes his nose.

“That might be a problem,” says the frog, “because soon people are going to start showing up here with their lemons, expecting you to turn it into lemonade.”

“I can’t,” says Albert, and then he sneezes.

The frog watches him carefully. He has never seen a human as skinny as Albert Wiggle, nor as tall. And those shoes must be at least size twelves!

“Well, Albert Wiggle,” he asks, “if you don’t make lemonade, then what DO you do?”

Albert thinks a bit and then says, “I solve riddles.”

“Like crossword puzzles?”

“Like talking frogs.” Albert scoops the frog up in his hands, and before the animal can protest, Albert turns him over and presses his fingers down into its soft, yellow belly.

“Stop it!” the frog giggles. “That tickles! What are you doing?”

“I’m looking for your switch,” says Albert. “I must say, you are a very well-designed TOY...”

The frog wriggles himself free and lands with a loud BLOB on the floor. Dust puffs up around him.

“How DARE you call me a toy?” he scolds. “I’m a frog!”

“A talking one,” says Albert, “that can turn invisible.”

“NMF.”

“What does THAT mean?”

“Not. My. Fault.” The frog rolls his eyes.

Albert folds his arms. “Whose fault is it then?”

But before the frog can answer, a breeze pushes through the open window. It tucks at Albert's shirt and whirls around the room, all the while making a strange whistling sound.

TUUUUUUU-WEEEEEE-TAAAAAH...

The frog jumps back in fright. “Oh no...” he whimpers, and scurries in under the chair.

CHAPTER 2

“What is wrong?” asks Albert.

“W-we have a visitor...” the frog croaks from under the chair.

“Already?”

Just then, as if forced by the wind, The Lemon Shop's wooden front door is flung open! On the step in front of it stands ... an old lady.

“Who the hiccup are YOU?!” she cries, pointing a bony finger at Albert.

But before he can answer, another gust of wind pushes in from behind her, tugging at her loose skirt and long hair. Dried leaves whirl into the empty shop and dance over the floor, and when the breeze settles the old woman is standing right in front of Albert.

He jumps in fright. “How the heck did you...?”

“Never mind the questions!” the woman scolds. “I’ve come for my rent.”

Albert stares at her. “Your ... rent?”

A voice croaks softly from under the chair, “Benestacia owns the land on which The Lemon Shop stands. She is your landlady...”

Benestacia bends down and peers under the chair. "You still alive, you sorry excuse of an amphibian?!" she cries.

But the frog has turned invisible and is now quiet as a mouse.

"I should have turned you into a lemon when I had the chance," she scuffs, and straightens again. She now peers at Albert, and he can see every wrinkle on her face. She looks about a hundred years old.

"You must be the nephew," she says.

"Albert Wiggle." Albert extends his hand, but Benestacia doesn't take it. Instead, she holds out her own hand, palm up.

"You owe me twenty-five pounds rent for the week," she says.

"What? Oh, but I ... don't have any money. I've only just moved in and..."

She cuts him off. "I will send the owl at seven. If you don't have the money by then, I'll turn you into a frog."

Someone snorts from under the chair.

"But how will I get twenty-five pounds before tonight?" Albert asks, scratching his head.

Benestacia throws her head back and laughs. "How the hiccup should I know? Sell some lemons, I suppose. I don't care!"

"But..."

She holds up a hand. "Let's get a few things straight, skinny man. You may own this miserable excuse for a shop now, but the land on which it stands is mine. You will pay rent, just like your uncle did, or there will be consequences. Is that clear?"

Albert swallows. "Y-yes."

"Just ask your friend there under the chair what I do to those who cross me..."

Just then a breeze pushes through the open window again, making a whistling sound again, although this time much friendlier. Almost like the sound of water bubbling over the smooth rocks at a mountain stream.

Benestacia grins. "See? Here comes a customer already."

Albert frowns. "How do you...?"

"Too many questions!" she shouts, throwing her hands up. "Just get on with it and make some money so you can pay your rent. Less talking, more hustling. Okay?" And with a

strange little chuckle that makes Albert's skin crawl, she spins around and struts out through the door.

“That wasn't too bad,” the frog croaks where he has now reappeared on top of the table.

“Says the one who has been hiding under the chair the whole time!” Albert scolds.

The amphibian only rolls his eyes. “We don't have time to discuss the difference between hiding and politely giving others some space. Our first customer is here.”

Albert shakes his head. “How does everyone KNOW this?!”

But before the frog can answer, there are footsteps on the gravel outside the open window, and then a girl's voice calls, “Hello? Anyone home?”

Albert goes to the window and peeps out. A little girl with bright blue eyes is looking up at him.

“Good morning! My name is Mila. I heard the people in town saying that The Lemon Shop has opened again, and so I came to see for myself.” She smiles. “ARE you?”

Albert frowns. “Are we what?”

“OPEN!” Mila giggles, and climbs onto the window-sill.

“I suppose so... But not for making lemonade.”

“What for then?” she asks.

“Riddling,” croaks the frog.

“What's that?”

“Something different altogether,” the frog explains.

“Oh, that's okay,” Mila says. “I'm not particular about lemonade anyway. But someone should tell THEM, don't you think?” She points to the footpath leading up to the shop through the trees.

CHAPTER 3

Albert leans further out of the window and sees a group of people beginning to form a queue in front of The Lemon Shop.

“What are they doing?” he asks.

“Looking for you, of course,” the frog croaks. “Told you. LOTS of lemons out there. And people want something sweeter.”

There is a knock at the front door, and before Albert can stop her, Mila jumps down from the window sill, skips over to the door, and opens it.

“Good morning!” she tells the old man standing on the steps. “Welcome to the residence of Albert Wiggle. How may we help you?”

The man looks nervous. “I am looking for the monger,” he says, peering into the dusty shop.

Albert decides it is time to intervene. “Um ... I'm Albert Wiggle and I live here now. I am afraid there won't be any lemonging today. My uncle Bert, the one who made lemonade, is unfortunately deceased.”

The old man looks confused. “I'm not here for lemonade.”

“What ARE you here for then?”

“So you can help me with my riddle, of course! Same as all those other folks out there!” The man waves his hand in the direction of the fast-growing queue outside.

Albert Wiggle stares at him. “How in the world did you...?”

But Mila quickly interrupts. “Of course Albert can solve any riddle you might have, sir! That is, if the price is right, of course.”

“What are you on about?” Albert asks. “I can't...” But there is no point really. The man has already produced his wallet and Mila has somehow found a piece of paper and a pen.

She writes down the man's name, then says, “That will be ten pounds, sir.” When the man hands her a tenner, she puts it into a dusty old glass jar on the kitchen counter.

“Now,” she tells the man, “please be so kind as to tell us your riddle.”

Three minutes later Albert Wiggle finds himself sitting down at the kitchen table across from the old man, listening to him tell his riddle. Which, to tell the truth, isn't really all that difficult to solve. Turns out, the man had lost his cow and doesn't know where to find it. But after asking him only a few questions, Albert deduced that the cow must've slipped out of the barn since the latch on the door is broken, and strolled off to the neighbour's buttercup field. A hungry cow can smell a buttercup flower a mile away.

Hardly worth ten pounds, Albert thinks.

But by then the next client is already at the door, eager to pay for Albert to solve their

riddle. And by the end of the morning, there is more than fifty pounds in the jar on the table. Enough for two weeks' rent.

“Well, what do you know!” the frog croaks. “You ARE good at solving riddles!”

“But how did these people KNOW that?” Albert asks.

“It must be The Lemon Shop,” the frog says. “It seems to be drawing folks to it – no matter what kind of monger lives inside. You have a gift for turning questions into answers, just like Bert had a gift for making sweet lemonade from sour lemons!”

“That doesn't even make any sense,” Albert sighs. He kicks off his shoes and lifts his tired feet onto one of the wooden crates. “What I wouldn't give for a nice pot of tea right now...”

“It is a pity you don't have an ASSISTANT,” Mila says. “My dad's assistant always brings him tea and biscuits, and all kinds of nice things for lunch.”

“Such a person sounds quite useful,” Albert agrees, as his tummy rumbles.

“An assistant will tidy your house and sort your mail and water your plants. AND they help you with all your appointments - writing things down and counting all the money to make sure you get paid right.” She taps with her fingernail against the jar that is now stuffed with notes.

Albert finally picks up on Mila's hints.

“Aren't you a bit YOUNG to be an assistant?” he asks.

“Oh please, Albert, let me be your assistant!” she cries. “My dad is ALWAYS working and my mom is ALWAYS working. And I AM SO BORED!!! Just let me assist you? Please? I promise you won't be sorry.”

“This does sound like a good idea...” the frog agrees. “Especially the part about biscuits. Besides, if more folks find out about your problem-solving skills, things can get very busy around here.”

Albert Wiggle wiggles his toes and thinks.

He can't see why not.

“I can't see why not,” he finally says. “You are hired.”

Mila shrieks excitedly. Then she opens the glass jar and takes out fifteen pounds.

“My fee is only fifteen pounds a week,” she says and puts the money in her pocket.

Albert's mouth drops open. "But..."

Then, before he can finish what he wanted to say, a breeze pushes through the open window and the front door slams shut with a loud BANG!

"N. G..." the frog whispers.

"What does that mean?" Albert asks.

"Not. Good."

Albert sighs. Each time a breeze shows up, something unusual happens. So what will it be this time?

CHAPTER 4

When the breeze dies down there comes a soft knock at the door of The Lemon Shop.

"Don't open it..." the frog croaks, disappearing into thin air.

"I agree," Mila says. "Let's pretend we're not here. Look, I've got goosebumps!"

"Oh nonsense," Albert says. "It is just someone with another riddle for me to solve."

"But the breeze..." the frog croaks somewhere.

Albert has no intention of minding breezes nor amphibian premonitions, so he gets up and opens the door. On the steps in front of The Lemon Shop stands an old woman with grey hair.

"It is just an old lady," Albert says over his shoulder.

"I am Mrs Glass," says the woman, who should mind Albert calling her 'an old lady', but really doesn't. "I came here as soon as I heard about the new monger. They say he solves problems?"

Albert pushes his glasses back on his long nose and straightens himself proudly. "That would be me. Albert Wiggle, at your service! Please come in."

He steps aside and Mrs Glass enters. She is slightly startled when he shuts the door behind them.

"I am a little jumpy today," she explains, smiling faintly. "Oh, I do hope you can help me..."

“It will cost you ten pounds for Albert to solve your riddle,” Mila says.

“Actually...” Mrs Glass says, “I was hoping Mr Wiggle could come down and see for himself. Will that cost more? To come with me? I'm willing to pay. You see, I'm not sure I can quite explain it properly. Some things one has to see for oneself.”

Albert frowns. “See what?”

Mrs Glass is looking more nervous by the second. “It is my house. I think it has a monster in the pipes.”

There is a moment of silence as they all stare at her. Then Albert chuckles. “There are no such things, Mrs Glass! Monsters exist only in stories. They are figments of people's imaginations.”

“What about the Loch Ness Monster?” Mila asks.

Albert shakes his head. “It doesn't exist.”

“And Bigfoot?” Mila asks again.

“Not real.”

“And what about all those...” Mila persists, but Mrs Glass cuts her off.

“I don't mean to be rude, but I think it is best that you come and see for yourself. Or rather, SMELL for yourself. Like I said, it is rather hard to explain.”

“Smell?” shrieks the frog as he appears without warning on the table right in front of Mrs Glass. The woman jumps back and screams in fright.

“Don't scare the customers!” Mila reprimands the frog, and shoves him aside. “Sorry about that, Mrs Glass. The frog has no manners. Please, tell us exactly what the problem is.” She helps the woman into one of the dusty old chairs. “You say there is a bad odour in your house?”

Mrs Glass sits down, still shaking like a leaf. “A v-very bad smell, yes. It's got me in a bad state, as you can see. It seems to be coming from the pipes.”

“And how do you know that your drains aren't just blocked?” Albert asks.

“It doesn't SMELL blocked, Mr Wiggle. It smells rather ... ROTTEN! Like a monster of sorts!” Mrs Glass' lip trembles. She looks very fragile indeed.

“Don't worry, Mrs Glass.” Mila puts an arm around her shoulders. “There isn't a problem on this earth that Albert Wiggle can't solve. You've made the right decision coming here. We will go with you straight away to smell this monster. And it will only cost you fifteen

quid!”

“There is no such thing as...” Albert still attempts, but Mrs Glass is already standing up, looking relieved. Mila is gathering her pen and paper, and the frog has jumped off the table, ready to accompany them.

Albert sighs. He is sure this is no more than a case of blocked drains and Mrs Glass' imagination. But he needs money for the rent, and he sure as heck is not going to dive into the lemonade business any time soon.

“Very well,” he says. “Let's go.”

Mrs Glass, looking very pleased, leads the way. Mila follows, and Albert takes his coat.

“Wait for me!” the frog croaks, and he gives three big, blobbery jumps towards the open door.

“What happened to having a bad feeling about this?” Albert asks.

“Still do,” the frog says as he hops past Albert's feet. “That is why I can't let you go all by yourself. You will need my help. And by the way, you might want to put your shoes back on. Your feet stink!”

CHAPTER 5

Mrs Glass' house is on the other side of the forest. It is made of red bricks with a wooden porch, and it has a nice-looking garden in the front. But as they approach, Albert notices the flowers in the front garden are all dried up and dead.

“It is because of that rotten smell,” Mrs Glass sighs sadly, when she sees him looking at the flowers. “I worked so hard on my garden, Mr Wiggle, and now these poor flowers are being suffocated by that horrid monster in the pipes!”

Albert decides it is best not to argue. He has said numerous times already that there are no such things as monsters, but it seems to fall on deaf ears.

“I don't smell anything,” Mila says, sniffing the air.

“Oh, then the monster must be out,” Mrs Glass says, pushing the gate open. “Come along and I'll make you some tea while we wait for him to return.”

Albert hasn't had any tea yet, and he feels a bit less irritated at the thought of a nice,

warm cup. Since this whole trip is a waste of time anyway, he decides, he might as well have some tea.

The kitchen is small, but neat. Albert and Mila sit down at the kitchen table while Mrs Glass fills the kettle with water. She then takes three cups from the cupboard.

The frog clears his throat loudly.

“Oh, I'm sorry!” Mrs Glass stammers. “I forgot about you, young fellow. I suppose you'd like some tea as well?”

The frog grins and jumps onto the table. It doesn't seem to bother Mrs Glass, having him there. She must've grown used to the slimy amphibian by now. She takes down a fourth cup and puts it with the others.

“When did you first notice the smell, Mrs Glass?” Albert asks.

“About a week ago,” she says, thinking hard. “Around the time of that great rumble.”

Albert frowns. “Rumble?”

“The earthquake. We get them from time to time out here. But this one was really big and rumbly. Everything shook and rattled. I thought the earth was going to swallow us for sure, house and all!”

Albert glances up at the shelves stuffed with teapots and cups and plates. There is no sign of a recent earthquake.

“Are you sure it was an earthquake?” he asks.

Mrs Glass blinks. “It was a loud rumble, Mr Wiggle, and the ground seemed to tremble. What else could it have been?”

“Well...” says Albert, “since you live at the bottom of a rocky hill, I assume you'll get some rockslides from time to time? Rocks coming loose and rolling down the hill?”

“I never thought of it,” says Mrs Glass. “But I suppose that could be something like that. You really ARE very clever, Mr Wiggle!”

The kettle whistles and Mrs Glass begins to pour their tea.

“So, you say it was after this rumbling incident that it started to smell in the pipes?” Albert asks as she hands him a cup of warm tea. He shakes his head when she wants to add milk.

“Albert is allergic to milk,” the frog explains.

“Yes, it was after the rumbling that we first noticed the smell,” Mrs Glass says. “And what a rotten smell it is! At night especially it is so bad that we can hardly sleep!” She presses a hand over her eyes. “And then there is that strange noise...”

“What noise?” the frog asks, his eyes big and round.

But Mrs Glass doesn't have to answer, because at that moment they all hear it: A terrible, wailing sound, coming from somewhere far below them, underneath the house. And then, directly after, a very, very bad odour comes seeping up through the cracks in the floorboards.

“The monster has returned!” whispers Mrs Glass with wide eyes.

“I have such a bad feeling about this...” the frog croaks, moving closer to Albert.

“It DOES sound like it's coming from the pipes!” Mila says. “And it DOES smell horrible!” She pinches her nose with her thumb and index finger.

Albert sniffs the air. “Well,” he then says, pushing his teacup aside, “I suppose I'd better go and take a look. How do I get into the basement, Mrs Glass?”

She points a shaking finger in the direction of a door at the back of the kitchen. “Down there,” she says. “Come, I'll show you.”

“Wait for me!” Mila says, jumping up.

“And me!” croaks the frog. “I'm not staying here all by myself so that foul-smelling creature can come and gobble me up while you guys are gone!”

When Mrs Glass opens the door, the rotten smell gets even worse. She switches on an overhead light, revealing a set of wooden stairs leading down into the basement.

For a second Albert Wiggle hesitates.

What if there really IS a wailing, stinking monster in the basement?

CHAPTER 6

They slowly move down the stairs into the basement - Albert in front, followed by Mrs Glass, and then Mila, carrying the frog in her arms.

The wailing sound has gone now and everything is quiet, except for the soft creaking of each wooden step when Albert puts his long foot on it. They finally reach the bottom of the

stairs.

It is dark in the basement and the rotten smell is SO bad that Albert is forced to take out his handkerchief and tie it like a mask around his head to cover his nose.

And what's even stranger: There are puffs of green-coloured smoke hanging in the air.

The basement is empty, except for a few boxes and crates, and a lot of cobwebs.

"It reminds me of The Lemon Shop," the frog teases.

Albert glares at him. "I was about to tidy up when you interrupted me, remember?" he says.

"Look," Mila says, and points to the walls. All four brick walls of the basement are draped with metal pipes. There are even pipes running over the floor!

Albert has never seen so many pipes in his life. "Where do they all go?" he asks, looking at the criss-cross of pipes, like the branches of a large metal plant that is growing in the basement.

"I ... am not sure," Mrs Glass says. "I think it goes up to the kitchen sink."

"Can you please run up and open the tap?" Albert asks. He takes a small flashlight from his pocket and switches it. Then he shines it onto the pipes, leaning in and peering at them.

Mrs Glass' footsteps go up the steps again, and after a few seconds they can hear her opening the tap in the kitchen upstairs. Then there is the soft singing sound of water moving happily through the pipes. Albert leans in and listens. He frowns.

"What is wrong?" Mila asks, wide-eyed.

"I don't think the water is running through these thick pipes," Albert says. "It only goes through those thinner ones along the ceiling. As they should, for those are the water pipes." He straightens and scratches his head. "I have no idea what these thick pipes are for."

"Heating, maybe?" Mila suggests.

"This house doesn't have heating," Albert says. "It is too old."

"He's right," Mrs Glass says behind them, coming down the stairs again. "The house doesn't have any of those fancy things. We're simple folk, Mr Glass and I." She looks at Albert. "Well, did you solve the riddle, Mr Wiggle?"

"Not yet..." Albert says. "But I have to agree with you, Mrs Glass. It doesn't smell like

blocked drains at all. And the water moves through the pipes with ease. Nothing seems to be blocked.”

Something scurries across Albert's long shoe, and he jumps aside, shining the small flashlight across the floor.

“What was that?” he asks.

They all look as best they can, but don't see anything.

“Perhaps just a mouse or a rat...” Mila suggests.

But Albert shakes his head. “I am extremely allergic to rodents. If there were mice or rats down here, I would've been sneezing my head off by now.”

“Well, you do have your nose covered up,” Mila points out.

Albert doesn't answer. He bends forward, inspecting one of the metal pipes on the floor.

“Mrs Glass,” he then asks, “was this particular pipe here before?”

“Before ... WHAT?” Mrs Glass asks, looking confused. “Before WHEN?”

“Before ... just now,” Albert says.

“Whatever do you mean?” Mrs Glass stares at him.

Just then there is the loud wailing sound again. This time it is close, coming from just behind the basement walls!

Mila screams in fright and the frog gets such a scare that it disappears into thin air.

“Oh dear...” Mrs Glass whimpers and she grabs onto Albert's arm. “It's the monster, Mr Wiggle! He has come to eat us all!”

“There is no such thing as...” Albert says, but the wail is loud and piercing, and it drowns out the rest of his sentence. All around them the pipes rattle and groan, and the light above their heads flickers.

“How odd...” Albert says, rubbing his chin.

The next moment there is a loud BANG and then a CRASH ... and then all of a sudden, the basement wall in front of them begins to crumble! Albert jumps back just in time as the first bricks come crashing down in a cloud of dust and foul-smelling air!

Out of the dust a creature appears, emerging from the space behind the wall. It is a big, stinking, grey creature with his arms spread wide and his mouth gaping. The thing wails and shouts at them over the sound of falling bricks. Then it stumbles forward and tries to

grab Albert by the shoulders.

A loud scream pierces the air. It takes Albert a second to realise that the scream has come from his mouth. That *he* is the one who screamed.

And he NEVER screams.

CHAPTER 7

For a few seconds all they can see is the cloud of grey dust. But as it settles, Mrs Glass suddenly cries out, "Oh, Mr Glass! I was wondering where on earth you'd gone off to!"

Albert and Mila stare at her, confused, and then they turn back to the grey creature who has now started to dust himself off.

"This ... CREATURE is you HUSBAND?!" Albert asks, eyes wide.

Mrs Glass steps forward and puts an arm around the creature. "Of course he is! This is Mr Glass, everyone. He's not usually this dusty, I must say. Mr Glass, meet everyone!"

"Um ... nice to meet you," Mila stammers. She still appears to be cradling something invisible in her arms, but so far there hasn't been as much as a croak the frog. The amphibian disappearing and reappearing is something Albert is getting used to by now.

Mrs Glass giggles and wipes the dust from her husband's nose. "What on earth were you doing in the wall, my love?" she asks.

Albert's head is spinning. He still feels a bit annoyed at himself for screaming, but that grey man coming through that wall was one of the scariest things he's ever seen!

"I was fixing the pipes," Mr Glass says, lifting what seems to be a hammer. "And I got my hand stuck. I tried to call you, but the walls must've muffled my voice."

"I told you not to fix anything..." Mrs Glass sighs.

"So YOU were making the wailing sound?" Mila asks. "We thought it was the monster!"

"Well, yes and no," Mr Glass says, and looks to his wife for help.

"Tthere IS a wailing sound," Mrs Glass says. "We've heard it before. Every night. Isn't that true, Mr Glass?"

Her husband nods. "It's true. It keeps us up most nights, as does the smell. The wife said she can't take it any longer. Told me she was off to see someone this morning about

the monster in the pipes.”

“And look! I found this lovely man!” Mrs Glass points at Albert. “Mr Wiggle here says he will catch the monster, my love! Isn't that wonderful?”

“Well, that's not really what...” Albert begins.

“That is great news!” Mr Glass exclaims, patting Albert on the back and leaving dusty handprints all over his jacket. “Good luck to you, Mr Wiggle!”

Albert coughs. He suspects he might be allergic to Mr Glass as well...

“You said you were fixing the pipes?” he quickly asks, taking a step back.

“That's right,” Mr Glass says. “I thought to myself: Mr Glass, be a man and get into the wall and see if any of these pipes needs fixing. Because maybe, I thought, all these noises and smells might just be the pipes after all, and then the wife dragged a good man all the way out here for nothing. And what if that good man wanted to take down the walls! That would be a mess...”

“But you DID take down a wall!” a voice croaks, and the frog appears in Mila's arms.

When Mr Glass sees the animal his dusty, grey eyebrows go up in surprise. “How strange... A talking frog!”

Albert clears his throat. “Well, Mrs Glass, that solves the mystery. It was just the pipes after all, and your husband fixed it.”

“But I didn't fix ANYTHING!” Mr Glass protests. “I mean, I WANTED to. But as soon as I got behind the wall, my hand got stuck. I just tried to pull it loose again for almost an hour. In the end I got so fed up that I used the hammer and then the whole wall came down.”

“Well, the smell seems to be gone now,” Albert says, sniffing the air.

Everybody sniffs. He's right. The air smells clean. A little dusty, but monster free.

Mrs Glass turns to her husband. “You scared the monster away, my love!” she says, proudly.

Albert sighs. His nose is twitching and he remembers now that he hasn't had his tea yet.

“If the problem is sorted,” he says, “you won't mind if we head back the The Lemon Shop? It has been a long day, and I still have a lot of work to do.”

“But we didn't see any monsters...” Mila sighs, disappointedly.

“Like I said,” Albert tells her, “there are no such things. Monsters are mere figments

of..."

Suddenly the earth rumbles under their feet. The walls start shaking. Dust flutters everywhere.

"Earthquake!" Mrs Glass shouts, heading for the stairs. "We must get out of here fast!"

Grabbing onto the railings and trying to cover their heads, Albert and Mila dash after Mr and Mrs Glass up the stairs. They run through the kitchen and out the back door. It is only when they get outside of the house in the garden, that they turn, gasping for breath, to look back at the house.

And then Albert Wiggle's mouth drops open.

It is not an earthquake, nor a rockslide. Because the only thing shaking is the Glass' little house! And then, while they're staring, two thick metal pipes grow from the chimney like two giant arms, stretching itself out! From the tips of the arms, puffs of red and yellow and green coloured smoke are now blown into the sky.

The most horrible stench, like something really, REALLY rotten, fills the air.

"The house is alive!" the frog cries out.

And this time Albert Wiggle tends to agree.

CHAPTER 8

"What are you looking for?" Mila asks as Albert pulls out another one of his desk's dusty old drawers and scatters the contents out on the floor. They are back at The Lemon Shop and the place is very quickly turning into an even bigger mess than it was before.

Ever since they've returned from Mr and Mrs Glass' house, Albert has been rummaging through his things and he has hardly said a word.

"It has to be somewhere..." he mutters as he topples the contents of a suitcase out onto the floor.

Mila folds her hands around her mouth. "What. Are. You. Looking. For??" she shouts.

Albert sighs and stops scratching around for a moment. "A book," he says. "I'm sure that I've packed it in somewhere and brought it with me when I came to The Lemon Shop. And now I can't find it."

“And please tell,” the frog says from where he is sitting on the window-sill, “what does this book have to do with the monster in Mr and Mrs Glass' pipes?”

Albert picks up another box and starts searching through its contents. “I KNEW something felt familiar,” he murmurs, more to himself than to the the others. “As soon as I saw that pipe that I KNEW had not been there before, I knew it. It all makes sense... The rotten smell, the rumblings, the growing pipes, the dying flowers – it all adds up! I should've known...”

Mila glances at the frog and the animal rolls its eyes.

“Ah!” Albert cries, as he pulls a thin book with a worn cover from the box and holds it up. “Here it is!”

He drops the box right then and there, and sits down on one of the wooden crates, book in hand. Mila comes closer and peers over his shoulder, and even the frog jumps off the window-sill to come and take a look.

“CRAZY THEORIES ABOUT STRANGE THINGS...” Mila reads the title on the front of the book. “What does THAT mean?”

“This book contains all kinds of theories that has never been proven before,” Albert explains. “Things that people had guessed, but could never actually find proof for. Like THIS.” He pages through the book, stops at a certain place, and then holds it so Mila can read the heading on the page.

“MONSTER JUICE...” She frowns. “What is that?”

“More than a hundred years ago there was a strange case about a man from South Africa whose farmhouse became alive. The pipes under the house started multiplying and growing bigger and longer until it ended up covering the whole house. One day the man just disappeared and some had a theory that he was sucked into those pipes...”

At the bottom of the page is a picture of a house that looks as if it is wrapped in a network of pipes! There were metal pipes all over the roof and the porch, going up all over the walls like some kind of strange plant.

“Listen here,” Albert says, tapping on the page with his long finger. “It says, a few days before the farmer disappeared he had complained about a foul smell. And about tremors...”

Mila gasps. “Just like Mrs Glass! But why does the title say 'Monster Juice'?”

“This farm house, just like the Glass' house, was built at the foot of a rocky hill. The

theory was that there was some type of lava underneath the rocks that caused the rumblings, and as the underground rocks tore open, the lava got into the pipes, causing the whole house to come alive. The more the pipes expanded, the more of this lava – this Monster Juice – spread. There was something strange about the lava. It was almost alien-like ... as if it were ALIVE.”

The frog's eyes bulge. “This is NOT GOOD. I knew it! Why did you have to be a riddle monger and not a lemon monger? Lemons don't eat frogs! They're peaceful little fruity things! Oh, this is bad... I knew it the moment I saw you, Albert Wiggle! You are going to get me killed!”

“Don't be such a drama queen!” Mila scolds him. “I'm sure Albert has a plan. Right, Albert?”

Albert doesn't answer. He is still staring at the article on the page.

“Albert?” Mila whispers. “You DO have a plan, don't you? You're not going to let the house eat Mrs Glass and her husband, are you?”

Albert finally puts the book down and stands up. “I need a cup of tea.”

“Tea?” Mila frowns. “But...”

“I have to think,” Albert says, “and I can't think properly without a cup of tea.”

“I've never heard of this...” the frog starts, but Albert holds his hand up to silence him.

“I need a cup of tea and I need complete silence. That means that YOU, my slimy friend, must disappear. And I mean for real this time!”

The frog sniffs indignantly. “Well, I know when I am not wanted anymore,” he mopes, and then he hops back onto the window-sill. “I will just be out on the roof then, if you need me.”

Albert turns to Mila. “Do you still want to be my assistant?”

“Yes.”

“Because if THIS is the kind of riddles I'm going to be solving, it may be a bit dangerous...”

“I want to be you assistant,” Mila grins, folding her arms across her chest. “And to prove it, I'm going to run to town and get us some tea and biscuits straight away. You stay here and ... do whatever it is you need to do. I won't be long.”

After Mila left, Albert walks through The Lemon Shop looking for the largest closet he

can find. Then he throws everything out of the closet and climbs inside. He sits down and closes the doors.

Albert Wiggle needs to think. And he thinks best in the dark.

CHAPTER 9

When Mila returns with the tea and biscuits, there is no sign of Albert. She switches on the kettle and then searches all the rooms of The Lemon Shop, but she can't see him anywhere.

"Albert?" she calls. "Where are you?"

But there is no answer.

When the water has boiled, Mila goes to the kitchen to pour the tea. She arranges biscuits on a plate, and looks around for a tray.

Just then, she hears a sound coming from one of the rooms.

With a cup of tea in her one hand and the plate with biscuits in the other, Mila slowly follows the sound to one of the rooms in the back. But the room is empty, except for a dusty old closet, perched up against the one wall.

"Albert?" she asks, frowning. "Are you in there?"

All of a sudden the closet doors fly open and out jumps Albert Wiggle, crying, "I've got it!! Mila, I've got it!! I know how to save Mr and Mrs Glass!"

Mila get such a fright she almost drops the tea. She stares at him. "Were you in the closet the whole time? What on earth were you doing there?"

"Thinking!" Albert beams. "But never mind that now! I need to get to work immediately! We don't have time to waste! It will be dark soon."

"But what about your tea?" Mila asks, lifting the cup and the plate of biscuits.

"Later," Albert says, and pushes past her. "First I have to go to the shed and get my tools. Send a message to Mrs Glass and tell her not to worry, I have solved the riddle! Tell her we will be there just after dark to catch their little monster."

Mila gapes. "But you said there are no such things as monsters?"

Albert turns and smiles. "In this particular case, my dear Mila, I may have been wrong."

Then he rushes off to the shed, leaving her with the tea and the biscuits still untouched.

Mila finds the frog on the roof, sulking.

“You have to come inside,” she says. “Something is up with Albert. He says he has a plan to catch the monster in the pipes.”

The frog snorts and rolls his eyes. “I don't care.”

Mila smiles. “I've got biscuits inside...”

“Biscuits? What kind of biscuits?”

Mila giggles. “Come inside and see for yourself. I'll make you a cup of tea as well.”

Mumbling and moaning the frog gets down from the roof and follows Mila into The Lemon Shop. There are loud knocking and banging sounds coming from the direction of the shed.

“What on earth is he doing?” the frog asks before he props two biscuits into his mouth.

“I don't know,” Mila says, playing with her cell phone.

“What is that thing?” the frog asks curiously, leaning closer. “I've never seen anything like it.”

Mila holds up the phone. “This? It is a mobile phone. It can take pictures, and everything. When I left to buy tea and biscuits earlier, I went by my house to pick it up, just in case we would like to take a picture of the monster...”

The frog shudders. “Do you really think there is a REAL monster in those pipes?”

Mila shrugs. “I don't know.” Then she grins. “But wouldn't it exciting though? I'm sure we can make some money if I can get a good picture of it.”

The frog scoops up another biscuit from the plate. While he is chewing on it, he asks, “Don't your parents mind you staying out this late?”

“My mom and dad are always working. They hardly notice me. It's very boring, having to entertain myself all the time. I think they're relieved that I made new friends.”

The frog opens his mouth to ask whether Mila's parents realise that one of her new friends is planning to take her to catch a monster ... but just then the door flies open.

In front of them stands Albert Wiggle, covered in soot and oil and dust, but with a

gigantic smile on his face. In his hands is the strangest-looking thing Mila's ever seen. It looks like a cross between a vacuum cleaner and a rifle, with a big nozzle in the front.

“And? What do you think of my device?” Albert asks.

“Um ... it looks great, Albert,” Mila says. “What is it?”

“This my dear, Mila, is a wobble-blaster!” Albert swings the thing proudly through the air. “This is how we are going to catch the monstrous lava and save the Glass' house!”

“Oh dear...” the frog croaks. “Don't like the sound of that. I knew I should've stayed on the roof.”

But Mila's eyes are bright with excitement. “Can I bring my phone to take some pictures?” she asks.

“Of course you can!” Albert says. Then he swings the wobble-blaster over his shoulder and asks, “Shall we go?”

CHAPTER 10

The sun is already starting to set when they reach the brick house at the foot of the rocky hill. But when they see the house, both Albert and Mila stop in their tracks. The whole house is now covered in pipes! There are pipes growing up the walls and over the roof! And every now and then there are gusts of red or yellow smoke coming from it – as if the house is breathing.

“Where is the frog?” Albert asks, looking around for the amphibian.

“Here,” a voice croaks behind his ear. And then Albert can feel the gentle weight of the frog's fat body on his shoulder. The animal has turned invisible again. And who can blame him?

“Exactly HOW does this wobble-blaster of yours work?” Mila asks, nervously.

“You'll see,” Albert grins, and then he stuts off towards the front door.

Mrs Glass opens the door just as Albert is about to knock. She has a clothes peg clamped over her nose and she looks pale.

“I'm doh glad you ah 'ere!” she says. “Mithteh Glah an I weh juh abou' doh deave. We can'd hay heh any dongeh. Deh 'mell ih juh too rohhen!”

She moves aside so they can enter. The whole inside of the house is filled with a faint red dust, almost like smoke and ashes from a fire. And there are pipes literally EVERYWHERE.

“Deh gihi haid dhat you dolved deh diddle, Mr Diggle?” Mrs Glass asks as her husband steps out of the kitchen, sporting a similar peg on his nose.

“Solved the riddle?” Albert asks. “Of course I have! Don't you worry about a thing, Mr and Mrs Glass. Why don't you step outside, while we take care of this little mess for you.”

“Um...” the voice on Albert's shoulder croaks, but he ignores it. He shoves Mr and Mrs Glass out the door, pegs and all, and shuts the door.

“What do we do now?” Mila asks with wide eyes.

“Now we go down to the basement and look at those pipes!” Albert smiles. He doesn't wait for her, but walks through to the kitchen where the door to the basement is. Mila follows, her phone clutched in her hand.

Underneath their feet the house is rumbling, and from somewhere far away comes a soft wailing sound. But the worst part is the terrible smell. Mila clutches her nose with her one hand, and Albert holds his breath, as they descend the stairs.

Down in the basement, there is hardly any room to stand. The whole space is crawling with pipes!

“We have to find the head,” Albert says, pointing at the pipes. “The one pipe from which all the other pipes grew.”

Mila looks around, wondering how on earth they are going to figure out which pipe was here first, when all of a sudden something grabs hold of her leg! She screams and kicks, and a piece of pipe falls off her leg, landing with a clank on the floor.

“Be careful...” Albert says. “And stay close to me.”

His eyes glance at the pipes as he carefully steps over them, keeping an eye out for anything that might try to grab him. And then he sees it...

“Ha!” he calls out, pointing to the open end of a large pipe standing up against the wall. “There! That's it!”

They move closer to the pipe, and the closer they get the more the rumbling under their feet intensifies. Mila has to hold on to Albert to steady herself as the floor shakes.

“How are we going to catch the monster?” she calls out to Albert above the noise.

“Not a MONSTER, Mila!” Albert calls back. “Monster Juice! And I am going to suck it up in the wobble-blaster! Stand back!”

Mila lets go of Albert and he takes the wobble-blaster from his shoulder. He points the nozzle at the opening of the pipe ... and presses a button on the side. The wobble-blaster lets out a high-pitched whirling sound as it fires up. Faster and faster the whirling goes, and worse and worse the rumbling grows!

“Hurry up, Albert!” Mila cries above the noise, holding her hand above her eyes to shield it from the flying red dust. “The house is going to swallow us!”

“Not if I can help it!” Albert says, and he presses the nozzle against the open end of the pipe.

The whirling sound turns into a sucking sound as the nozzle starts sucking at the pipe. The floor trembles and pipes rattle louder and louder. And from deep inside the pipes they can hear the wailing grow closer and closer.

“It's coming!” Albert calls out excitedly.

“I don't like this!” the frog croaks. “Do you hear me, you crazy riddle monger?? I don't like this at all!”

Albert ignores the frog as the nozzle keeps sucking.

“The juice is coming!” Albert calls out, grabbing the wobble-blaster tighter in his hands.

“Um ... Albert?” Mila is staring at the pipe. “I don't think it is juice...”

Albert glances down to where Mila is looking, and then he frowns.

“What in the world...?” he mutters. Because there in the pipe, being sucked closer and closer by the wobble-blaster ... is something BIG.

Something that makes a big bulge in the pipe.

Something very much like ... a MONSTER!

CHAPTER 11

“It's the monster!!” the frog yells.

“There are no such things as...” Albert begins, but the rumbling and shaking is now SO bad that he doesn't have time to finish his sentence. He has to hold on to the wobble-

blaster with all his might to keep it from being yanked out of his hands.

“It's coming closer!!” Mila cries, lifting her phone to get a good photo of whatever is emerging from that pipe!

There is a loud CREEEEAAAAAK!!

Then a loud THUD and an EXPLOSION!

Albert Wiggle is flung backwards and the wobble-blaster's nozzle shoots off the pipe!

Out of the open end of the pipe something very big and red shoots up into the air, its large claws spread wide. The most horrible wail you can ever imagine escapes the creature's gaping mouth. Albert shuts his eyes, expecting to be swallowed by the monster any second ... but ...

... THE MONSTER TURNS INTO A BLOB OF LAVA AND PLOPS TO THE FLOOR.

Before you can say 'Monster Juice' Albert Wiggle is up on his feet, aiming the wobble-blaster at the pool of red ooze on the floor. The nozzle sucks and sucks, and this time, it sucks every last bit of the lava-ish Monster Juice up!

It all becomes quiet, except for the satisfied purring of the wobble-blaster. The wailing is gone and the trembling is growing fainter and fainter with each passing second.

“So ... so ...” stammers the frog as he slowly reappears on Albert's shoulder, his eyes large and round, “it wasn't a monster after all?”

“Nope,” Albert says, switching off the wobble-blaster. “It was just a blob of Monster Juice, or lava, stuck inside the pipes.”

“Like a blocked drain?” Mila asks, narrowing her eyes.

“Something like that...” Albert says, still trying to catch his breath. His hands are shaking and his glasses are all fogged up from the heat of the lava.

“You do think you've got everything?” Mila asks.

“I think so,” Albert nods. “I don't hear any more rumbling, do you?”

Mila and the frog listen, but everything is quiet now.

“Let's get out of here,” Albert says. “I need a bit of fresh air.”

“Me too,” Mila agrees, slipping her phone into her pocket. She turns and carefully steps over the empty pipes. She scoops the frog off Albert's shoulder and heads up the stairs with the animal in her arms. “I can't wait to show everyone the photo I took of the monster,”

she says.

“You mean the lava blob?” croaks the frog.

“It was a monster,” Mila insists.

“Lava!” the frog croaks back.

“What do YOU think, Albert?” Mila asks.

There is no answer.

She turns around. There is no sign of Albert anywhere. The basement is empty.

“Albert? Where are you?”

The frog fidgets nervously. “This is no time to be making jokes, Albert Wiggle!” he croaks, turning his large eyes this way and that as he searches the basement.

“Albert, this is not funny!” Mila calls out.

Just then there is loud clatter in the corner. “Over here! Help! The pipes! They've got me and they're pulling me in!”

In the dim light of the basement, Mila and the frog can now make out Albert underneath a pile of pipes. He is wriggling and struggling to free himself, and the pipes seem to be holding him back. One of the pipes is curled around his leg.

“Not good...” the frog croaks, and disappears.

CHAPTER 12

Shocked, Mila and the frog watch as the pipes curl tighter round Albert's legs, and begin to drag him towards the opening where the Monster Juice has come out.

“The wobble-blaster!” Albert shouts. “Take it!”

He throws the wobble-blaster and Mila dives forward to catch it before the pipes can grab it. She is not sure how to operate it, but with trembling hands she finds the button on the side, and presses it. Immediately the wobble-blaster makes its whirling sound. Mila aims the nozzle to where Albert is still struggling with the pipes. The device sucks and sucks with all its might, pulling on Albert's hair and his shirt, but the pipes pull harder.

“It is not working!” Mila cries. “What do I do?!”

“You have to come closer!” Albert shouts back.

As Mila goes closer, he reaches out as far as he can and grabs hold of the wobble-blaster's nozzle. The whirling-sucking sound gets louder and louder as the machine does its best to rescue its maker from the threatening pipes. Mila clings to it with all her might, but around her the pipes are growing again, and grabbing at her feet!

“I can't hold it any longer, Albert!” Mila cries out over the noise. “Do you have another plan?!”

“I don't!” Albert calls back, as the pipes begin to curl around his waist.

“Well then ... MAKE ONE UP!” Mila shouts. “You are the riddle monger, are you not?!”

Albert bites his lip and tries to think, but the pipes are making it really difficult. Then, suddenly, he gets an idea...

“Where's the frog?!” he shouts, looking around.

“Not here!” a voice croaks from the stairs.

“Go and fetch Mr Glass! And hurry! He has to come and fix the pipes!”

“Sorry, the frog's not here,” the voice croaks again. “Send someone else.”

“FROG!!!” Albert and Mila scolds simultaneously.

“Or I will never ever let you have a biscuit ever again!” Mila adds.

There is a moment of silence.

“Frog?”

Then the amphibian slowly appears on one of the stairs.

“Fine...” he grumbles. Then he turns and quickly hops up the stairs.

“I don't understand...” Mila frowns, jumping out of the way of another grabbing pipe. “I thought all the monster lava was gone!”

“It is gone!” Albert calls out. “But the pipes must be pulled out! They are thirsty for Monster Juice now! They will swallow anything!”

Mila screams as a swinging pipe nearly misses her head. “I am so NEVER building my house next to rocky hill!!!” she shouts. Her arms are trembling and the wobble-blaster is huffing like a tired dog. It is beginning to slip from her hands...

“NO!” she cries out, holding on. “Where is that frog?!”

There is a loud crack and a rumble, and then the walls of the basement begin to shake.

“What is happening?!” Mila cries.

A few bricks come flying loose, scattering onto the floor. Then some more, and even more! Albert ducks the escape being hit by one. And then, in the hole in the wall, appears Mr Glass, a big hammer in his hands!

“Stand back!” he shouts. “Time to fix these pipes once and for all!”

He swings the hammer through the air and brings it down hard on one of the pipes pulling at Albert's legs. There is a CLANK and a BING ... and then the pipe scatters in pieces.

“Take that, you horrible thing!” Mr Glass cries out and he again brings the hammer down. And with every blow against the metal more of the pipes scatter into pieces.

As soon as Albert's legs are loose, he quickly crawls out of the way. Mila helps, dragging him out of harm's way, and they scurry into a safe corner, where they crouch down.

Because Mr Glass seems to be ENJOYING himself...

He is hitting pipes left and right. Over and over he bangs with the hammer and they can hear him laugh and shout over the noise. He doesn't stop until every last bit of piping has been shattered into pieces. Then he drops the hamer, out of breath, and smiles at Albert Wiggle.

“That was fun...” he says.

Mrs Glass appears on the stairs and when she sees the mess of broken pipes in the basement, her eyes grow wide.

“Oh dear,” she says. “I'm afraid Mr Glass is not very good at fixing things...”

Albert Wiggle grins. “I was counting on that!” he says.

Mila giggles.

They all now look around them at the bits of broken pipes, covering the basement floor, and the room grows quiet.

“I'm a bit confused,” Mrs Glass finally says. “Was there a monster, or wasn't there?”

“There wasn't,” Albert says, swinging the wobble-blaster over his shoulder.

“There was!” the frog croaks next to Mrs Glass' feet on the stairs.

“Wait!” Mila remembers, pulling her phone from her pocket. “I have proof! I've taken a

photo of the monster! Wait till I show everyone! They will never believe me.”

She flicks through the photo's on her phone, and then her face falls.

“Oh no...” she sighs.

“What is wrong, my dear?” Mrs Glass asks, concerned.

“There is a big, red blob right in front of the monster! You can't see a thing!”

Albert puts his arm around her shoulders. “Maybe it is better that way,” he says. “Some theories are better left unproven.”

“Well, monster or no monster,” Mrs Glass says. “I don't think we're will be living here anymore. There is a nice cottage in town that I've had my eye on for a while! It even has heating!”

“Oh, you don't have to worry about the house,” Albert says. “With the Monster Juice gone, all can return to normal. I have solved the riddle!”

Mrs Glass smiles. “Yes, you have, Mr Wiggle. But I'm afraid these walls are going to need a lot of fixing ... and I think Mr Glass has done quite enough fixing, don't you?”

Everyone laughs.

“Here is your money, as promised,” Mrs Glass says, taking a couple of notes from her pocket.

Albert takes the money, but then his eyes grow wide.

“I've completely forgotten!” he says and jumps up. “What time is it?!”

“It's almost seven o'clock,” Mrs Glass says.

“We have to go! The owl is coming to collect the rent! Come on, Mila. I don't think we want to get in Benestacia's bad books! That will be worse than any monster you can imagine...”

He rushes up the stairs, scooping the frog up in his arms on the way.

After the owl had left with the rent money, and Mila had gone home, Albert finally makes himself a warm cup of tea. Then he takes a biscuit, and climbs out the window. He finds the frog on the roof, staring at the moon.

“What a day,” Albert sighs as he sits down next to the amphibian. “I must say, this was

not what I imagined when I decided to move to uncle Bert's place.”

The frog rolls its eyes at him. “And this was not what I imagined when I saw you moving in this morning...”

Albert grins and takes a sip of the tea. It is nice and warm. He breaks the biscuit in half and shares it with the frog.

“So, no making lemonade?” the frog asks after he's swallowed the last bit of crumbs.

“No making lemonade,” Albert agrees. He turns to the frog. “I'm sorry, old friend, but it appears I will be solving riddles and chasing monsters from now on. You're welcome to stay and help, of course. If you want.”

The frog eyes him curiously. “I thought you said...”

“Yeah, yeah,” Albert says, tickling the frog's head. “There are no such things as monsters.”

The frog sighs. “I'm not saying I am going to LIKE it, but...”

“Yes?” Albert asks, looking at the moon.

“If there are going to be biscuits on a regular basis, I can live with riddles and monsters for a bit.” He glares at Albert. “Just try not to get us eaten, okay?”

Albert grins. “That sounds...” But when he turns to the frog, the animal has disappeared.

“That sounds nice,” Albert says softly to himself. And then he takes another sip of his tea.

THE END

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About the author...

ANNA EMM is a South African author who lives in London. She has written more than 3,000 children's stories, 21 short romance novels, 38 detective novellas, 5 suspense novels, and various stage productions. In South Africa she has often appeared on TV and radio, speaking about the therapeutic power of stories.



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